



Inclusivity:

Free and Fair Elections Needed in Southeast Myanmar

The difficulties and challenges rural communities, people with disabilities, first-time youth voters, and communities in areas controlled by ethnic armed groups in Southeast Myanmar face when participating in the 2020 Elections

HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION OF MONLAND
OCTOBER 2020

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A Report by

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

October 2020



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Human Rights Foundation of Monland [HURFOM]

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland [HURFOM] was founded by pro-democracy students from the 1988 uprising and more recent activists and Mon community leaders and youths, and its main aim is for the restoration of democracy, human rights and genuine peace in Burma.

HURFOM provides information and reports to all campaign organizations to get help from the international community for democratic reform in Burma.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Code of Conduct (COC)

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Community Service Organizations (CSOs)

Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs)

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Mon Unity Party (MUP)

National League for Democracy (NLD)

Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)

People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE)

People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Union Election Commission (UEC)

United Nations (UN)

United Nationalities Alliance (UNA)

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Chapter (1) Introduction

On November 8, 2020, Myanmar's citizens will again head to the polls for the country's 3rd General Election since the 2008 Constitution was approved. According to official statistics, voter turnout for the 1st General Election, in 2010, was 77% of eligible voters, while approximately 70% cast their votes in 2015 for the 2nd General Election.¹

However, according to data collected by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) during the 2015 Election, across Mon State, approximately only 50% of eligible voters turned up at the polls to cast their votes. It was concluded that the public in Mon State, many who had a strong and genuine desire to participate in

1 ၂၀၁၅ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ၌ မဲပေးခွင့်ရှိသူ ၃၄ သန်းကျော်တွင် ၇၀ ရာခိုင်နှုန်းခန့် မဲပေးခဲ့။ ဒီဇင်ဘာ ၃၁၊ ၂၀၁၅ - 7Day News Journal

casting their vote to see change in the country, were not satisfactorily given the opportunity to be involved in the election.

HURFOM believes that, although the public in Mon State truly desires change, their lack of participation in electoral activities stems from a dissatisfaction due to the presence of difficulties, barriers, and challenges that they must face in order to participate. HURFOM strongly believes that, with inclusiveness and equal opportunity for participation by people in all of Myanmar's ethnic regions and states, Myanmar's upcoming election will be free and fair.

In order for this inclusivity to materialize, it is necessary for the public, or that of eligible voters, to participate and cast their votes. Thus, the difficulties, barriers, and challenges that the public faces must be solved so that the voters will thoroughly be able to participate in the elections.

Those most affected by these challenges are those living in remote, rural communities, especially, senior citizens, women, internally displaced persons (IDPs), villagers living under ethnic armed organization (EAO)-controlled areas, first-time voters, domestic legal/illegal migrant workers, and people with disabilities (PWDs). A common thread that runs throughout is a lack of formal education and knowledge about the core issues of the election (e.g., parties, candidates).

The core objective of this report is to emphasize the importance of having free and fair elections without leaving anyone out—the necessity of all-inclusive elections in Myanmar. By identifying the challenges faced by communities in ethnic regions and states, we hope the government can then find and implement practical solutions to address these barriers and challenges facing voters in casting their ballots. Thus, this report was produced to support respective government departments and organizations with the requisite information to develop solutions to address the difficulties, challenges, and barriers to participation in voting.



Although Myanmar holds regular elections, this does not mean that a true democracy has been established. One component of a true democracy is that elections be free and fair, and that all community levels or classes, without eliminating anyone, can participate. Individuals from all sectors, such as government departments, organizations, corporations, and the public, itself, should cooperate in taking part in

making this election accessible for all.





Chapter (2) Methodology

HURFOM is a human rights organization that has been documenting human rights violations and the voice of the public since its inception in 1995 using a methodology developed over 25 years of experience.

While compiling data for this report, HURFOM operated on a policy of “community trust and cooperation”, which was vital to our methodology. Therefore, while gathering information, instead of having the team, itself, solely conduct all activities, our Field Team encouraged the community, particularly Village Committees, to cooperate and engage in the process of coordinating and gathering information.

The project area included villages in Kyaikmayaw, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, and Ye townships, Mon State; Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State; and Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region. In each township, HURFOM appointed one local advisor and two local volunteers, hence, six local advisors and 12 local volunteers, compiled the

information through the project area. Training was provided to the 12 local volunteers for three days in Mawlamyine, Mon State. These volunteers had worked with HURFOM previously, collecting data on prior projects and also participating in human rights campaigns. Therefore, in terms of qualifications, they were adequately qualified. In addition, two permanent HURFOM staff members also conducted exclusive individual interviews with informants.

The Field Team traveled across six townships to 30 villages and interviewed 129 locals. Moreover, HURFOM held meeting with the presence of 30 community people, and such meeting was held two times. Also, with the support of the local advisors, HURFOM's Field Team conducted interviews with 12 local villagers via the Internet and phone.

While compiling the information, HURFOM documented and gathered information from the groups most likely to be left behind from participating in the election, namely, citizens living in remote communities, particularly, senior citizens, women, PWDs, first-time youth voters, and people living in areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations.

HURFOM compiled data from August 2020 to September 2020 in the above respective categories and township and regions. The gathered data was coded, analyzed thematically, and develop into this report by HURFOM Staff in Mawlamyine. Previously gathered data from previous research missions were also incorporated into the analysis.

Challenges

The HURFOM team faced several severe difficulties and challenges through the implementation of this project. With the COVID-19 crisis, much like the rest of the world, travelling and meeting community members in Mon State was acutely hampered. Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the Mon State Government and EAOs, HURFOM had to cancel two public meetings. It was also a challenge to collect data and meet deadlines. HURFOM also faced complaints of organizing an election campaign, since the project activities were related to the election.

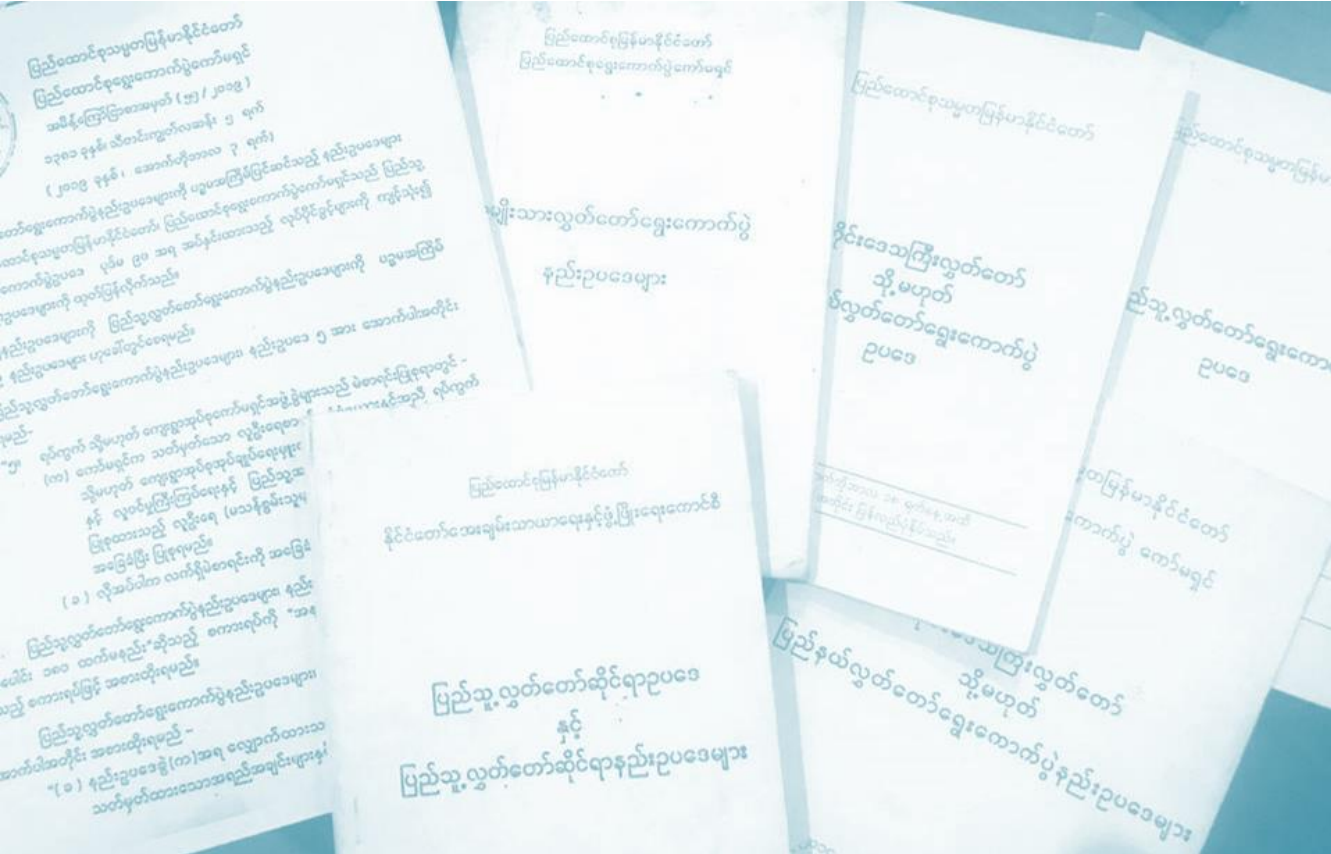
Due COVID-19-related travel restrictions, HURFOM had to cancel its original plans of traveling to the field for data collection and instead had to reach out through other means, namely, the Internet and mobile phones. Since gathering data in remote areas, where communication via Internet and phone is limited or non-existent, was

prioritized, HURFOM's team had to travel on land and by water making overnight trips. Due to harsh transportation routes and travel conditions, the team also faced challenges while traveling.

Access to information remains very limited in Myanmar, and, hence, the HURFOM Field Team also faced difficulties in confirming information collected and in conducting research. In addition, the Field Team also faced inconvenient responses and rejections when they conducted interviews with relevant government departments.

The Field Team was also advised to follow the COVID-19 Prevention and Protection Methods instructed by the Ministry of Health and Sport, and they were also provided with adequate protection materials against COVID-19. HURFOM implemented its project by prioritizing the health and safety of its Field Team and the communities they visited.





Chapter (3) Background: Legal Challenges to Free and Fair Elections

1) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly on December 19, 1966. Myanmar became a member of the United Nations (UN) on April 19, 1948; however, it has never signed the ICCPR.

In September 2019, it was reported that Eain Mae Township, Myaungmya District, Ayeyarwady District, Pyithu Hluttaw representative, Daw Thandar, proposed that the Union Government sign the ICCPR, and the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation is preparing to sign the Covenant.

"In ICCPR, no one is discriminated. It protects ethnic people, women, and children. Since the government has to help protect for that, it supports for

the government's responsibility," said U Aung Myo Min, the Director of Equality Myanmar, in an interview with Eleven Media Group.²

HURFOM urges the Union Government and Union Parliament (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as it guarantees the right to self-determination and free political ideology and beliefs.

2) Electoral Law, Article (10)

Article 10 in Myanmar's Election Law allows domestic migrants and migrant workers the ability to vote.

The new law, or Article 10, which was adopted March 17, 2010, states that any citizen of Myanmar who has been away from his/her constituency during the election is granted the opportunity to vote where he/she, as a migrant, is present. However, he/she must have lived for at least 6 months or 180 days if he/she wants to vote at the place where he/she is eligible to vote.



² လူ့အခွင့်အရေးနှင့်သက်ဆိုင်သည့် သဘောတူစာချုပ် နှစ်ခုကို အစိုးရလက်မှတ်ရေးထိုးရေး အရပ်ဖက်အဖွဲ့အစည်းအချို့ လွှတ်တော်ကော်မတီများနှင့် တွေ့ဆုံဆွေးနွေး၊ ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၅၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ Eleven Media Group

However, the Union Election Commission adjusted the duration for migrants to vote to 90 days instead of 180 days. The 90-day duration was approved on February 20, 2020, by the Pyithu Hluttaw.

Ethnic political parties viewed this move negatively, as they felt it would impact on local ethnic candidates poorly, as migrant workers who had been present for a short period of time in the electoral district would be eligible to vote.

Nai Layea Tamarh remarked migrants would also have difficulties travelling back home to vote in their electoral district; thus, the government and Union Election Commission (UEC) should consider providing an advanced voting system for them.

In response, not only did the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA)—composed of 12 ethnic political parties and other parties, such as the Democratic Party for a New Society and the United Nationalities Democracy Party—release a statement on February 24, 2020, objecting to the extension, but the Kachin National Congress Party also staged a protest against the 90-day duration amendment in Kachin State's capital, Myitkyina, on March 9, 2020. However, since there was no objection in parliament, the Amyotha Hluttaw approved it on May 20, 2020, and there was no need to get further approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.³

“Our MUP, along with other parties, has submitted an objection letter to the Union Election Commission. We also sent it to the respective Hluttaw. But it is not fair, as they have approved it, although we have objected it,” said Nai Layea Tamarh, MUP's Joint-Secretary (1).



On August 18, 2020, the MUP stated that the current UEC did not take into consideration the concerns or advice of political parties when it made the amendments to the election law.

“To compare with the last commission [UEC], the current commission is very much weak in terms of taking advice from political parties and accepting the voices from

³ ရက်ပေါင်း ၉၀ သဘောတူညီချက်နှင့် လူနည်းစုတိုင်းရင်းသားပါတီများ၏ အပူ၊ မေ ၃၁၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ Eleven Media Group



the political parties. For amending the rules, the commission did not take into consideration the views of the political parties,” said Nai Layea Tamarh.

3) Code of Conduct (COC) of Political Parties and Candidates

The UEC and political parties signed the Code of Conduct (COC) for Political Parties and Candidates on June 26, 2020, at Melia Yangon Hotel, Yangon.⁴

While the political parties view that the COC is not in line with the law, it does not appear that any political parties or candidates will face charges if they do not follow it; however, there is agreement among them that it is best to compete in the election with dignity.



⁴ နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီကျင့်ဝတ်စည်းမျဉ်းပြင်ဆင်ချက် ပါတီတချို့ သဘောမတူ၊ ဇွန် ၂၆၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ VOA။



“It’s the code of conduct that the respective political parties came together, compromised, and agreed on for a free and fair election. Having that, it will be more supportive for a fair election in terms of abstaining from conflicts between individual parties who are competing, but rather having fairness and abstaining from insulting one another,” said Nai Layae Tamarh, Joint-Secretary (1) of MUP, who participated in the COC signing ceremony with the political parties and candidates.

In the (COC) Chapter 3 on Conducting Election Campaign Activities, it states: “In line with the Political Parties Registration Law Chapter II (Article 6d), the Parties commit to abstaining from writing, delivering speech or organizing and instigating that which can cause conflict or that which can affect dignity and morals relating to nationality, religion, individual or public...fueling regionalist, racial, sectarian or tribal trends that could threaten national unity”.⁵

The above-stated phrase is very general, and it won’t be satisfactory for ethnic (i.e., non-Bamar) political parties, since it appears that it does what it wants for.

“Actually, this article is the article that should be removed. If not removed, it should be described in a more exact and specific way. It will be regionalist and racial.....about one’s region and one’s nationality. How is “sectarian” defined? They did not write it clearly,” said Nai Min Latt (aka Nai HtuN Myint Kyaw), of MUP and who is competing for the Thanbyuzayat State Hluttaw Constituency (1).

The underlying issue is the vagueness in the language, and the term “racial” applied here can create challenges for ethnic (i.e., non-Bamar) political parties, which are

5 နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီများနှင့် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းများအတိတ် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာကျင့်ဝတ် - စက်တင်ဘာ ၆၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်

unable to compete in all constituencies across Myanmar but who can only campaign for their ethnic group's votes when conducting campaign activities during elections.

4) Hluttaw Election Laws

Article 58(C) of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, and State/Regional Hluttaw Election Law is also problematic.

It states “uttering, making speeches, making declarations, and instigating to vote or not to vote on grounds of race and religion or by abetment of such acts;” which is by doing so means encouraging to do so.

“This point is a problem. In Myanmar’s political issue, the national issue has already existed. If we look at that article, it appears that even if it is political issue, we are unable to speak out,” said Nai Min Latt.

That law states: “Whoever is found guilty of or abetting one of the following acts shall, on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or with fine not exceeding one hundred thousand kyats or with both.”

“Stating this article, I am worried that they will do as they will and apply it when they want to or not. When the political parties are conducting the election campaign [activities], it will be a challenge to speak and talk about the political problems”, continued Nai Min Latt.

5) Pyidaungsu Government Law and the 2008 Constitution

The UEC announced on July 1, 2020, that the 2020 General Election would be held on November 8, 2020. The following day, July 2, the National League for Democracy (NLD), released a special announcement stating that the State Counsellor, NLD Chairperson Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the President, NLD Vice-Chair (1) U Win Myint, would start organizing party activities and conducting regional campaign activities “from today onward”. The statement also mentioned that the NLD would be conducting such activities in accordance with the Union Government Law.

The Union Government Law was enacted by the former State Peace and Development Council in 2010, and Article (7) states: “To not to lose the opportunity of being elected, government staff can start party campaigning and regional campaign

activities, starting the day that the Union Election Commission announces the election [note: this is not a direct translation, but rather a loose translation by HURFOM staff].

However, according to the 2008 Constitution's Chapter (III), Article (64), "If the President or the Vice-Presidents are members of a political party, they shall not take part in its party activities during their term of office from the day of their election.", and Chapter (V), Articles 232 and 234 state: "...The union minister and deputy ministers...they shall not take part in its party activities during the term of office from the day they are appointed...".

Likewise, Chapter (14) of the 2008 Constitution, Article 447 states: "Existing rules, regulations, by-laws, notifications, orders, directives and procedures shall remain in operation in so far as they are not contrary to this Constitution until and unless they are repealed or amended by the Union Government..".

HURFOM firmly believes Union Government Law, Article 7, contravenes the 2008 Constitution, and that it gives preference to the ruling party over other political parties. This law must be amended to ensure free and fair elections.

6) Election Monitoring



The People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE), which monitored both the 2015 and 2017 Elections across the country, submitted an application to the UEC to monitor the upcoming 2020 Election on July 14, 2020. However, on July 30, the UEC denied PACE's request to observe polling activities.

Following the UEC's response to PACE, on August 13, 458 community service organizations (CSOs), urged the UEC to re-think their rejection of PACE's services. Then, the UEC contacted PACE through phone informing that it now allows the PACE to continue its monitoring project.



The UEC provided recommendation's to PACE on August 18 for the organization's registration. However, on August 21, the UEC again informed PACE that the UEC would only provide a document of acknowledgement for election monitoring after the PACE had

registered as an organization and received a registration number.⁶

The UEC's (2) core reasons (of UEC's registration prevention) are 1) the organizations that did not register and that the organizations that are getting support from international community.

However, the Registration of Organizations Law, Chapter 4, Article 7 states: "The chairperson, Secretary or Responsible person of local organization shall submit the application to the respective registration authorities according to the procedures to get registration certificate as per their free will."

Since PACE is not a registered organization, it is not in line with the law to be a barrier any of its activities. Also, prior to 2020, when PACE asked for a recommendation letter for the organization's registration from the UEC, the UEC refused to provide the letter.

The second factor the UEC is concerned with, regarding organizations receiving support from the international community, being accused by the UEC is not defensible, since the UEC itself has accepted the support from the international community.⁷



6 ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ ပြည်သူ့လှုပ်ရှားမှုအဖွဲ့ (PACE) ကို ယာယီအသင်းအဖွဲ့မှတ်ပုံတင်ဖြင့် ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကို လေ့လာခွင့်ပြုမည်ဟု ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်အဖွဲ့ဝင် ဦးမြင့်နိုင်က ၂၀၂၀ စက်တင်ဘာလ (၃) ရက်နေ့တွင် ပြောဆိုခဲ့သည်။



During the 2015 Election, Mon State had 17 groups⁸ acting as watchdogs over the election; however, according to U Hein Lin Htet, Secretary of Mon State's Election Sub-Commission, until August 17, 2020, no group had applied for election monitoring in Mon State for the 2020 General Election.⁹ This is problematic, as there is a lower chance of having the election proceed as free and fair with fewer groups monitoring the election.

“If there is only one or two groups [of election watchdogs], we cannot tell that such number of group can cover all [polling stations]. If the number of watchdog groups is smaller, there won't be much free and fair [elections],” said Daw Khine Khine Lei Myint, Chairperson of the Mon State Youth Network, in an interview with Southern Myanmar News on August 19, 2020¹⁰.

7 မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရွေးကောက်ပွဲအတွက် ဂျပန်နိုင်ငံနှင့် UNDP မှ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲမင်များ ထောက်ပံ့မည်၊ ဩဂုတ် ၁၅၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ မစ္စီမသတင်းဌာန။

8 မွန်ပြည်နယ်၌ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲစောင့်ကြည့်လေ့လာမည့်အဖွဲ့ လျှောက်ထားမှု မရှိသေး၊ ဩဂုတ် ၁၈၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ DVB သတင်းဌာန။

9 မွန်မှာ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲစောင့်ကြည့်လေ့လာဖို့ လျှောက်ထားသည့်အဖွဲ့ မရှိသေး၊ ဩဂုတ် ၁၇၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ သံလွင်တိုင်းမီသတင်းဌာန။

10 မွန်ပြည်နယ်မှာ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲစောင့်ကြည့်လေ့လာရန် လျှောက်ထားသူ မရှိသေး၊ ဩဂုတ် ၁၉၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ Southern Myanmar News



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ရှက်ခွံသုတ်ပြန်ရန်

ကော်မရှင်၏ ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်က ရွေးကောက်ပွဲစောင့်ကြည့်လေ့လာမှုလုပ်ငန်းစဉ်အတွက် ငြီးစားသည့်အဟန့်အတားဖြစ်

၂၄ ဩဂုတ် ၂၀၁၈ ရက်နေ့

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Although previously, there were collaborations between the former election commission, election watchdogs, and CSOs in drawing up a COC and procedures for election monitoring and observing, there has been no collaboration or discussion with this current commission.¹¹

It can be inferred that the UEC instead of the term of “Election Watchdogs/observers”, the election commission used “observers”

As the Commission's slogan goes: "free and fair"; there is an important sector for the watchdog groups to participate in the election. Hence, HURFOM urges that no tightening of or new

restrictions be placed on election watchdogs by the UEC.



၁၁။ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲလေ့လာသူများ ဆောင်ရွက်ရန် အရေးပါသော အချက် (၃) ချက် ချန်လှပ်ခံရဟုဆို၊ ဇူလိုင် ၁၈၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန။



Chapter (4) Challenges Faced by Citizens in Rural Communities

HURFOM conducted field work and interviews with local citizens from 30 villages in six townships that were specifically selected to identify the challenges that villagers in rural, remote communities encounter when participating in elections. Through this field work, the HURFOM Field Team interviewed 120 individuals, listening and documenting their voices and concerns regarding opportunities to participate in the election.

To systematically determine these challenges and obstacles, the HURFOM Field Team designed questionnaires and conducted individual interviews. In addition, focus group discussions were also held through workshops.

The voices gathered from both individual interviews and group discussions with local community members in remote areas are illustrated in the following chapters.

1) Election-Related Information Compiling

Although Myanmar has been run by a government elected by the public for almost a decade, the public still has limited access to information.

On August 6, 2019, Pyithu Hluttaw approved the National Records and Archives Law, which allows for sentencing an individual for up to 5 years if they take information safeguarded by the government.¹²



“Since I have never been anywhere, I know nothing. I do not have a radio or a TV,” said a woman, 65, from Paythakhat village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

People in Mon State also have difficulties accessing information. According to the interviews conducted, the public must rely on the village's General Administration Office for information on the election. Approximately 70% of the interviewees rely on



the village General Administration Office for information about the election.

“I get to know some information from the village administrator's announcement with his loudspeaker. I do not know how to use a phone. I cannot read either,” said a woman, 42, from Ka Don Si village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

Although 40% of villagers still rely on traditional forms of media, such as radio, TV, newspapers, and journals, the number of people who consumed information from the internet and social media is still very small.

¹² သတင်းသိရှိရန်ကို ထပ်ပြီးကန့်သတ်မယ့် ဥပဒေ လွှတ်တော်အတည်ပြု - ဩဂုတ် ၆၊ ၂၀၁၉ - BBC News မြန်မာ



Of the people that the HURFOM Field Team interviewed, although 1 out of 3 people used social media (i.e., Facebook), only a small number of them knew of or visited the UEC Facebook page, and a very small number of them checked the UEC page.

When HURFOM conducted interview with an AhLaeSakhan villager, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region, on September 10, they said: “I am on the list of voters. This is just like what the paper said earlier; I found about this on Facebook. I do not know which constituency, though. [after mentioning about the candidates] I do not know who the candidates are yet. I think, due to COVID-19, it's difficult for the representative to come to our village tract.”

When HURFOM Team conducted public meetings in Thanbyuzayat Township, the team received feedback that the UEC should provide information to every citizen including people from rural area as much as it could so that it will be the UEC is with the public.

Community members also urged political parties, candidates, and CSOs to provide election-related information to everyone including citizens residing in rural areas.

2) Election Education: How to Vote

“I never participated in any training. The CSOs came to provide the training. But I did not get to join, so I do not know about it,” said a female villager, 32, from Ah-Nin Village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

“Last year, there were trainings. But this year, we have not seen any yet,” a female villager, 43, Phar-chaung Village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region

HURFOM believes that, at the time the Field Team began collecting data, political parties and CSOs had not yet provided training, since they were not campaigning at the time. Hence, the locals did not have much knowledge yet.

“Last year, there were trainings provided here. But I did not get to join. But this year, no one yet came to provide the training,” said a female villager, 39, from Ka-thon-zi Village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

Since the villagers did not get to join the educational training on the election, there could be misunderstandings, and it could cause barriers to accessing and exercising their rights for politics and citizenship.

“I never got to join the training. When I go to vote, I will ask the people who already voted on how to vote. For sure, I will vote. I am not educated. I do not know if it's right or not,” said a female villager, 54, from Ah-Nin Village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.



Since the community members still lack knowledge related to the election, it's necessary to provide them with the training that aid them in exercising their civic rights..

“The villagers in our village do not have much knowledge. We have a plan to provide training to the villagers for them to be able to vote if we have time,” a female villager, 55, Yehte Taung Village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, educational trainings on the elections for the public have been limited. Mon State Election Sub-Commission Secretary U Hein Lin Htet stated on September 11 that since the COVID-19 transmitted cases in Mon State have been going up, election-related training, which are intended to provide to ward/village level election commission groups, have been put on hold.¹³

3) Access to Information on Political Parties and Candidates

Mon State has 291 candidates from 12 political parties in addition to 11 independent candidates competing in the state.¹⁴

When HURFOM inquired about political parties and candidates from interviewees, the majority answered that they were aware of local political parties and the more dominant political parties. However, they did not know much about the candidates themselves. HURFOM assumed that because the election campaign had not started when the Field Team conducted the survey, interviewees were less likely to know candidates in depth.

“I do not know any of the political parties yet. I know nothing I do not know the name of the candidates either,” said a male villager, 65, from Paytakhat village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

A female villager, 42, from KyaukBiLuu village tract, Three Pagodas Pass Sub-Township and Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State, said that until September 9, she did not know any of the profiles of the candidates competing in her constituency.

“There are three political parties. I do not know about the candidates’ backgrounds, because they are not from this area [village],” said a male villager, 55, from Yethe Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

These responses from the locals documented by HURFOM show that it is necessary for the candidates to put special effort into informing the public about their parties’ policy and objectives during their election campaigns.

13 ရပ်ကျေးကော်မရှင်အဖွဲ့ဝင်တွေကို ပို့ချနေတဲ့ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ သင်တန်းများ ရပ်နားထားရ (ရုပ်သံဖိုင်) - စက်တင်ဘာ ၁၁၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမီ

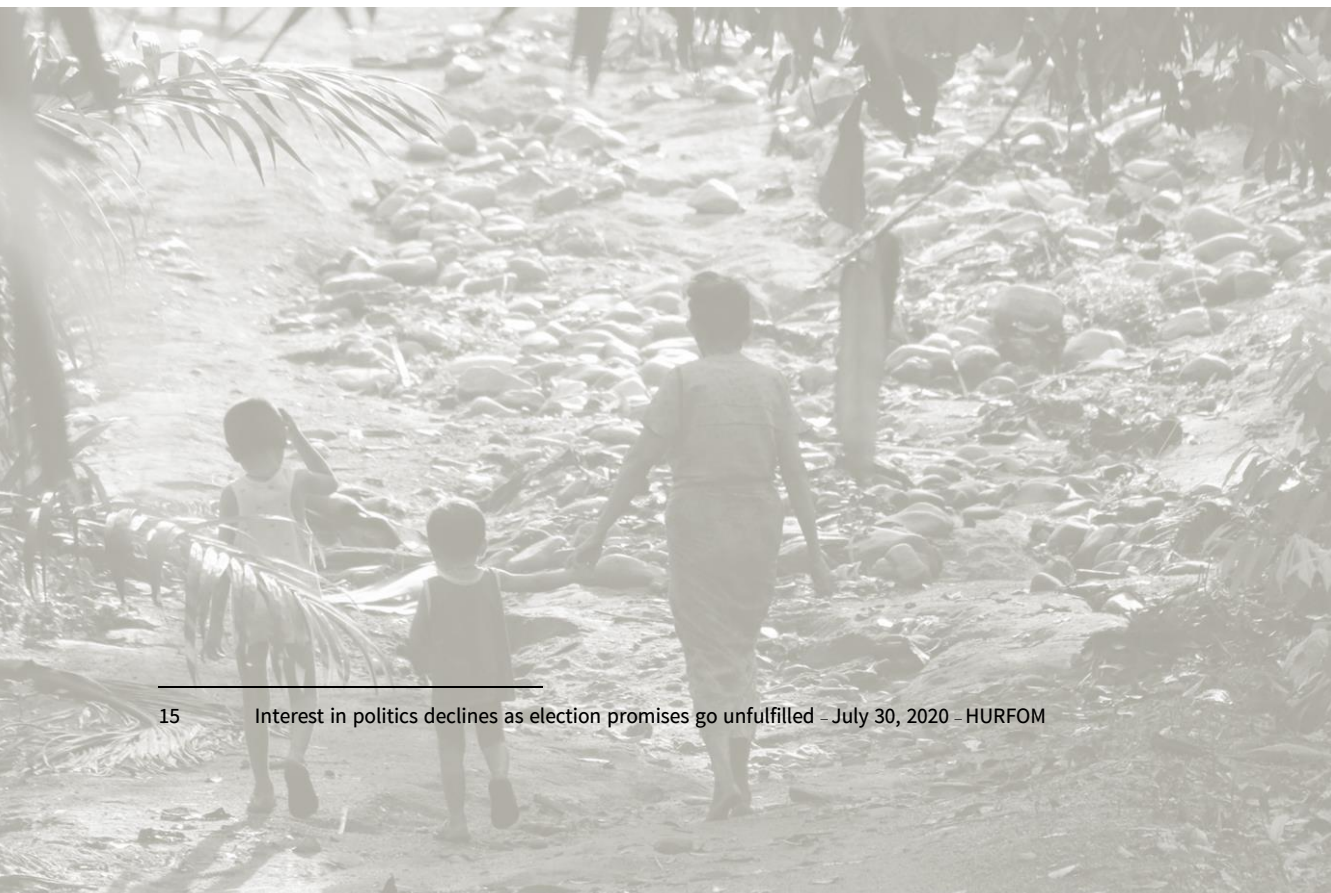
14 မွန်ပြည်နယ်တွင် ပါတီ (၁၇) ပါတီနှင့် တစ်သီးပုဂ္ဂလကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်း စုစုပေါင်း ၉၃၀၂ ဦး ဝင်ရောက်ယှဉ်ပြိုင်မည် - စက်တင်ဘာ ၁၁၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမီ

“The candidates do not have much close contacts with the locals in this region. We do not know much about their backgrounds,” said a male villager, 63, from Yethe Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

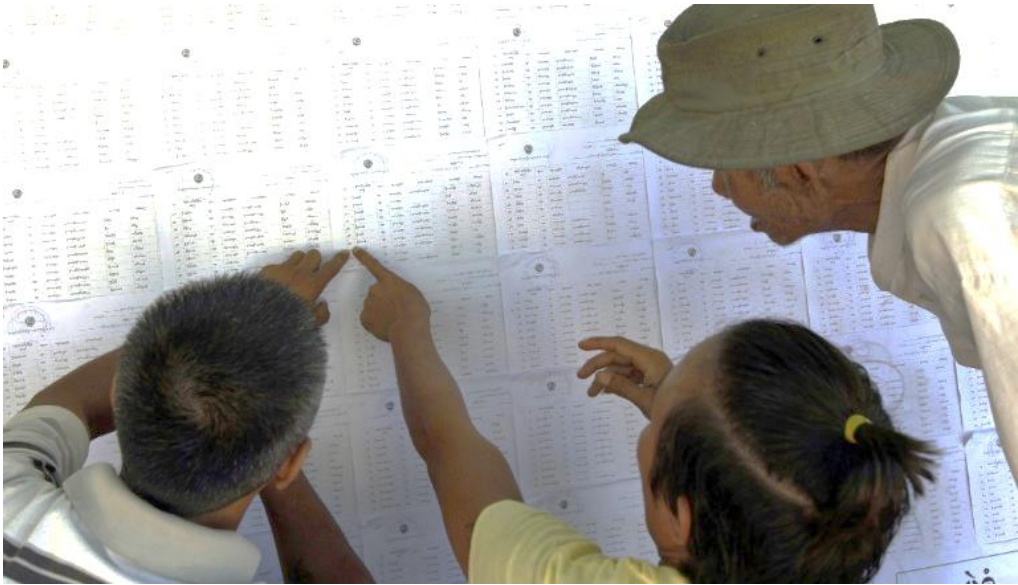
It is vital that political parties and candidates explain their election platforms and promises while conducting their campaigns in order for them to attract the public to get out and go vote for them. Political parties and candidates should explain to the public about their parties’ policy and promises for the future via the elections.

It is the parties’ and candidates’ responsibilities to implement post-election what they promised during the election campaign. A major reason why the public is not interested in elections is that many of the promises that are given are not then implemented.

“Our village Administrator has been advocating to people with loudspeakers to check the voter list. When I urged my relatives to go and check the list, they replied, “Why do we have to care about the voter list? When a candidate is elected, only their relatives and family members profit. They did nothing for us”. Most of the villagers think in a similar way so they don’t keep the voter list in mind,” said a female activist from Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, who is urging more youth engagement in the election.¹⁵



4) Voter List Problem



Although the UEC stated that it would conduct the 2020 Election not for show but for a real free and fair election, there have been many mistakes on the voter lists announced on July 25, 2020.¹⁶

Even Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's name, the State Counsellor, was duplicated on the list,¹⁷ while the names of the family members of the Union Minister of Labor, Immigration, and Population Ministry were also mistaken.¹⁸

According to U Myint Naing, a member of the UEC, at the level of whole country, due to the mistakes on the voter list, the number of people who objected, till August 4, 2020, was more than 220,000.¹⁹

In Mon State, due to the initial incorrect voter list presented, over 21,000 people replied for the voter registration, according to U Hein Lin Htet, Secretary of Mon State Election Sub-Commission.²⁰

Of all interviews conducted by the Field Team, 80% had citizenship-related documents including ID cards and household documents, but only 60% were on the voter list.²¹

16 ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ဟန်ပြမလုပ် စံပြလုပ်မည်ဟု ကော်မရှင်ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ ကတိပေး - ဩဂုတ် ၂၄၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန

17 နိုင်ငံတော်အတိုင်ပင်ခံပုဂ္ဂိုလ်၏အမည် မဲစာရင်း ၂ နေရာတွင် ပါဝင်နေ - ဩဂုတ် ၁၄၊ ၂၀၂၀ - DVB

18 လဝကဝန်ကြီးဦးသိန်းဆွေမိသားစု မဲစာရင်းမှားယွင်းနေ - ဩဂုတ် ၅၊ ၂၀၂၀ - RFA Burmese

19 ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ တစ်နိုင်ငံလုံးမှာ မဲစာရင်းမှားလို့ ကန့်ကွက်သူ လေးသိန်းကျော် ရှိ - ဩဂုတ် ၅၊ ၂၀၂၀ - BBC News မြန်မာ

20 မွန်ပြည်နယ် မဲစာရင်းမှာ အမည်မပါလို့ ပြန်လျှောက်ထားသူ (၂၁၀၀၀) ကျော်ရှိ - ဩဂုတ် ၁၆၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမ်

“I have a household document and ID card. For the voter list, all family members’ names were provided. I also gave the names of our family members who are abroad,” said a female villager, 39, Ka Don Si village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

There is the possibility that the reason for the lower percentage of voters on the voting list is because they were left out or the voters did not go check the voting list. According to the interviews, 60% said they went to check the voter list in some form.



“I have an ID card. I also have a household document. I have not checked the voter list yet. When the voter list was provided, I was not at home. I do not know whether my name is on the voter list or not,” said a 50-year-old woman, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I have an ID card and a household document too. I have not checked my name on the voter list yet. When the time comes, the administrator will come to tell us. Then we will go vote,” said a 46-year-old woman from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

Over 15% of the people interviewed who went to check their names on the voter list said it was not correct, and they had to re-apply. However, they had difficulties when they replied for voter registration.

“I went to check the voting list. But two of our family members’ names were not correct. Yet, we reapplied for that. There were no problems when we reapplied,”

said a 54-year-old woman, from Ah-Nin village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

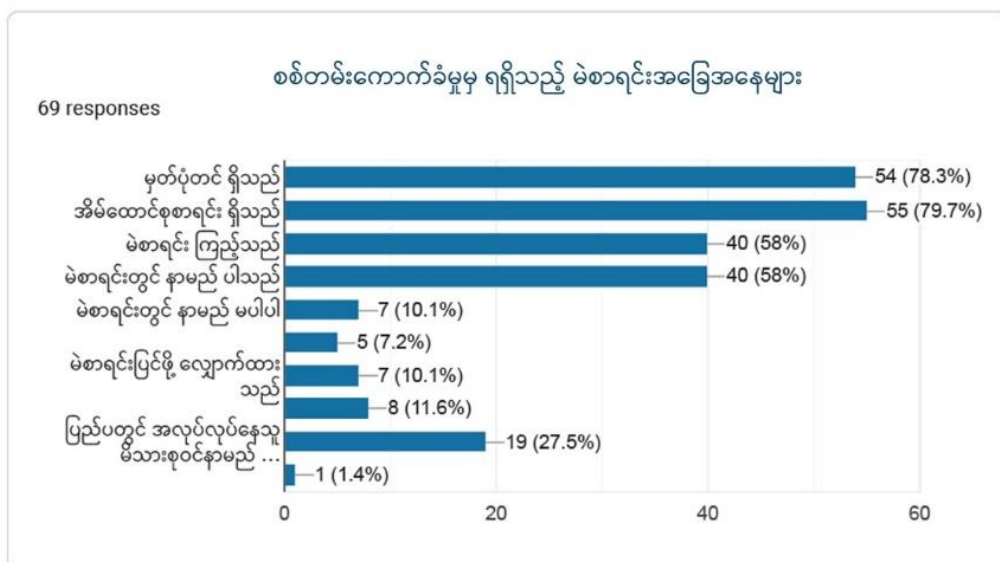
21 ကျန်ရာခိုင်နှုန်းများသည် မဲစာရင်းမှ ချန်လှပ်ခံရသည်လည်း ဖြစ်နိုင်သကဲ့သို့ မဲစာရင်းသွားရောက် မကြည့်ရှုသဖြင့် အတည်မပြုနိုင်သည်များလည်း ရှိသည်။

“I have to reapply with the Administrator since my name was not correct on the voting list. My name was on the list twice and my children's names were not there. Yet, there was no difficulty when we reapplied,” said a 56-year-old woman, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

The UEC discontinued the first verification of the voting list before August, and the second announcement/verification was again provided on September 20.

Feedback and suggestions were provided by participants at a public meeting HURFOM held on August 31 in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. Community members felt that to have an accurate voter list and to not omit eligible voters, the UEC should take concrete action, while CSOs and the public should also cooperate and advocate for voters to check the voting list to ensure their names are included.

“We’ve formed a youth group in our village. When the voters’ list is announced, they will tell villagers to go and check the list. And they will help villagers to correct and amend the voters’ list,” said Nai Mon Saw Noal, the Village Administrator for Naing Hlone village, Mudon Township, Mon State.²²



5) Polling Stations

In the 2015 Election, there were over 40,000 polling stations, including ones in areas under the control of the Tatmadaw forces, and 34 million voters cast their votes. According to the data, for the 2020 Election, there are 37 million eligible voters, 3 million more than the 2015 Election according to the UEC.²³

In the 2010 and 2015 Elections, there was one polling station in a ward or village tract per 300 and 3,000 eligible voters, respectively. But for the 2020 Election, since the number of eligible voters has increased, the UEC will open more polling stations.²⁴ However, the commission has not announced the exact additional number of polling stations.

In the 2015 Election, there were over 1.5 million eligible voters in Mon State. In the 2020 Election, there are more than 1.7 million eligible voters, and of which first-time voters or 18-year-old youths, alone, make-up over 100,000 voters. In addition, over 5000 of eligible voters are those who have returned from abroad and over 4000 are PWDs.²⁵



According to the provided figure, Mon State has additional of almost 3 million voters and 954²⁶ polling stations, including 49 stations for the Tatmadaw members, are allocated in Mon State for the 2020 election, according to the Mon State Election Sub-commission.²⁷

To prevent COVID-19 transmission and due to the increasing number of voters in Mon State, an additional

23 ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲအခြေခံမဲစာရင်းအရ မဲပေးနိုင်သူ ၃၇ သန်းကျော် ရှိမည် - နိုဝင်ဘာ ၂၇၊ ၂၀၁၉ - မြန်မာတိုင်းမ်အပတ်စဉ်

24 ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲတွင် မဲရုံများ ထပ်တိုးဖွင့်လှစ်မည် - ဇွန် ၂၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန

25 မွန်ပြည်နယ်၏ မဲပေးပိုင်ခွင့်ရှိသူ အရေအတွက် ဖော်ပြချက် - ဇွန် ၁၇၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမ်

26 မဲရုံပေါင်း (၉၅၁) ရုံ ဟုလည်း ဆိုသည်။

27 မွန်ပြည်နယ်တွင် မဲရုံ ၁၀၀၀ နီးပါး လျာထား - ဩဂုတ် ၂၄၊ ၂၀၂၀ - BNI Multimedia Group

22 polling stations will be opened and a total of 973 polling stations will be installed in Mon State, according to U Hein Linn Htet, Secretary of the Mon State Election Sub-Commission.²⁸

Although having the number of polling stations based on the number of voters is suitable for voters in urban areas or areas with better infrastructure/road access, it is necessary to consider the distances among villages in rural areas when determining the adequate number of polling stations for rural areas.

“It is not near. We have to travel by boat to go there. We have to go vote at the school in Thingyan Taw village,” said a female villager, 65, Paythakhet village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

“The commission has considered setting-up one polling station for three villages. It’ll be okay for the nearby villages,” said Nai Chan Mon, who will compete for Kyainnseikyi Township Constituency (2).²⁹

According to the interviews the Field Team conducted, more than 40% said the polling station was very far from their place of residence, and 20% said they would have difficulty in traveling to the polling station.

“The polling station is not that far from our house. But we have to travel there by boat,” said a female villager, 35, of TheChaung village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

“The polling station is a bit far from here. But it’s not difficult to travel to there. The polling station staff members are very friendly and helpful,” said a female villager, 51, Karotpi village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

“I have voted two times already. The polling station is far from our house,” said a female voter, 50, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Seventy percent of the interviewees responded that, although there are some difficulties in reaching the polling stations, the staff at the polling station were friendly and helpful, and the voting process went smoothly with their help.

²⁸ မွန်ပြည်နယ်မှာ မဲရုံ ၂၂ ရုံကို တိုးချဲ့ဖွင့်လှစ် (ရုပ်သံဖိုင်) စက်တင်ဘာ ၁၁၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမ်

²⁹ Candidate says Kyainnseikyi voter education urgently needed for new voters – September 7, 2020 – HURFOM

One male voter, 56, from Mudon Township said: “The polling station is very close to our house. There is no difficulty in reaching the station. The staff at the station also helped me.”

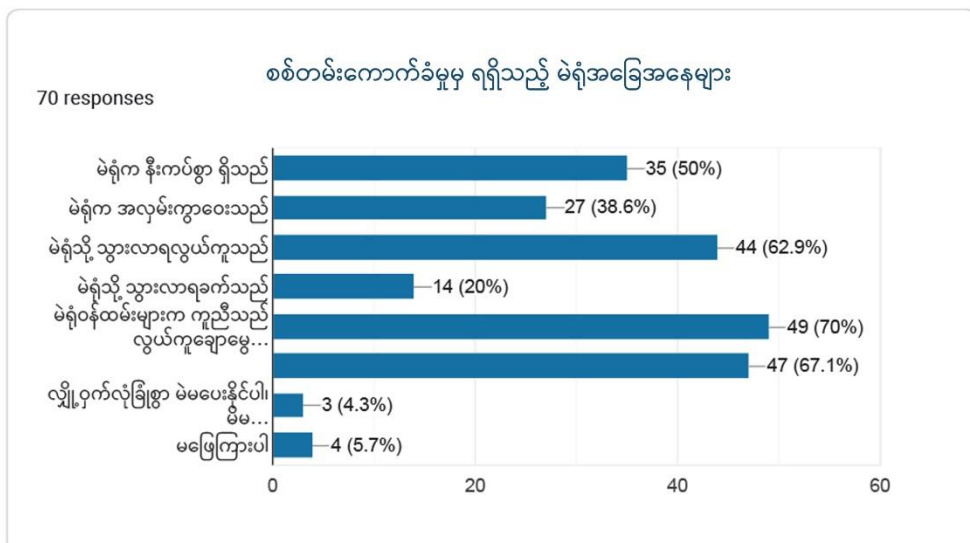
“The staff at the polling station also helped. When I voted, it was very convenient. It's safe too,” said a male voter, 55, from Ya Thae Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Only less than 5% of the interviewees said it was not secure, and that they faced pressure while voting, although most of the interviewees said felt safe.

“During last election, there was pressure. They wanted us to vote for their side but not for others. That was what I faced. It's not that I had to be afraid, though. I do not know what it will be like this time yet,” said a female villager, 39, Ka Don Si village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

HURFOM welcomes the decision by the Mon State's Election Sub-Commission to extend the number of polling stations. It would accept the positive responses from the interviewees about the polling stations.

Extending the number of polling stations to cope with the increase in the number of voters as well as considering the installation of polling stations in rural areas not just based on the number of voters but the location of the villages will lead to better outcomes and creating positive civic and voting environments for all.



6) Voting Procedures

In the 2010 Election, voters were required to tick “Correct” when voting, and in the 2015 Election, a stamp was used. When the HURFOM Field Team was conducting the survey,³⁰ there was no confirmation from the UEC yet for what procedures will be applied in the 2020 Elections. But 25 days ahead of the election, on September 11, the UEC announced the valid vote and abstain vote process.



“I know about the voting process for the last 2015 Election. But I do not know yet what it will look like if the voting process for 2020 Election is new,” said a male villager, 56, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I do not know the voting procedure. I will just cast the ballot when I have to. I do not know if it's an abstain vote. I only have to cast one ballot. When my name is called upon, I will just go vote. That's all,” said a female villager, 65, Paythakhat village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

Seventy percent of interviewees answered that they knew how to vote but do not know about abstained votes, and 80% answered that they did not know that they had to vote regarding three chambers of the Hluttaw Parliament. “I know how to vote for not abstained votes. But it'd be better if training is provided for the villager. [For example, that] three ballots were cast,” said a male villager, 63, from Ya Thae Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

It is necessary that the respective organizations provide training, widely, on the abovementioned issues by eligible voters in order that important votes are not lost. This is because voters have been to the polling stations, but they are yet to know the voting process precisely.

³⁰ ၂၀၂၀ ဩဂုတ်လ

“I know how to cast the ballot. I will just have to press my thumb. I have to cast two times,” said a female villager, 39, from Paythakhet village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

Voters may cast their votes, but if they do not know the process well, their votes may be abstained votes. That means they lost their rights to vote for their candidates. In the 2015 Election, 5.38 of the cast votes were abstained votes.³¹

“When I vote, I do not know yet whether what I tick is right or not. When I am told to tick, it would tick,” said a female villager, 42, of Ka Don Si village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

“I have never voted. I was told by our neighbors that when the election is getting close, the Administrator will show us how to vote. I will have to vote as he tells us how,” said a female voter, 60, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I do not know. I know nothing. After I vote, that is it,” said a female villager, 53, from PaukTaw village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

In the 2015 Election, all across the country, 23 million voters cast ballots for the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw and abstained and loss votes made-up 1.5



31 မြန်မာ ၂၀၁၅ အထွေထွေရွေးကောက်ပွဲ အချက်အလက်နှင့် ကိန်းဂဏန်းများ - ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၂၀၁၆ - ပြည်ထောင်စု ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်

million and over 1 million for each, respectively.

From the above, there was a large number of abstained votes; therefore, in order that the public's effort and rights in exercising their right to vote is not squandered, training on the voting procedures should be provided thoroughly and effectively.

7) Threats, Barriers, and Vote-Buying during Elections

According to the COC for the election agreed upon by political parties and candidates, in Chapter 4's Security section, it states "conducting an election campaign by threatening violence anytime or with violence should be banned" *[note: this is not a direct translation, but rather a loose translation by HURFOM staff]*. In addition, in Chapter 5, it states to stay away from "abusing power by bribery and threat or similar methods, taking special advantage of the election's objective (or) influence", as well as not to commit to "using public property to ensuring the obtention of votes from the public (or) the buying of votes."³²

Of the interviews with community member the HURFOM Field Team conducted, 30% revealed that although there were no threats or barriers during past elections, there were forms of vote-buying such as the provision of support in exchange for votes.

"I do not know much about [this and political] parties. But it's about getting support. What they are supporting is for the campaign. I think, they are supporting to get votes. I have seen that before. But this is not in our village," said a female villager, 51, from Karotpi village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

"Threating, barriers...I have never seen. But I have seen the parties are supporting [people]," said a female voter, 24, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

"Some parties provide traveling and meal fees when they do election campaigning," said a male villager, 56, Kwan KaWi village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

32 နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီများနှင့် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းများအတွက် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာကျင့်ဝတ် - စက်တင်ဘာ ၇၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်

“[A] party has provided rice and cooking oil,” said a female villager, 39, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

According to the Union Election Law, the candidates should not use more than 10,000,000 kyat for the election campaign. The law also stated that the candidates must submit their expenses along with documents or proof at their respective district office within 30 days following Election Day.³³

The majority of interviewees stated they have not faced any threats concerning the 2020 Election. But there have been instances where posters (Vinyl banners) of the ruling party, the NLD, have been destroyed in Mon State, including in Paung Township’s Thanthapingyi village and in other townships.

Also, a young person from Kawthat village, Kyaikmayaw Township, destroyed an election campaign poster (Vinyl banners) of the NLD, and he was charged under Election Law Articles (57) and (58).

“We sued him to protect the reputation of the NLD and the candidates. The poster also included a picture of State Counselor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the patron of the NLD. If we don’t sue him, all of our posters will be destroyed,” said U Khin Zaw Oo, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative and whose picture was on the poster too.³⁴

8) COVID-19 Crisis

Another significant challenge that voters are facing during the 2020 Election is the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the widespread of the COVID-19 virus, some townships have ordered their citizens to stay at home and imposed travel



³³ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲအသုံးစရိတ် မတင်သွင်းသည့် ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်း ၂၉ ဦးကို ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ ဝင်ခွင့်ပိတ်ပင်မည် - ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၁၂၊ ၂၀၁၆ - 7Day News

³⁴ NLD’s election campaign poster destroyed in Kyaikmayaw – September 15, 2020 - HURFOM

restriction and tighter health rules and regulations.

Up to 50 people are allowed for gatherings during election campaigning, but in townships with lock-down orders, gatherings are not allowed for election campaigns.

The campaign trip by the State Counselor, scheduled on September 8, was cancelled as the Ministry of Health and Sport did not permit it to be held.³⁵

The People's Party's chairperson suggested on September 8 that the election should be postponed.³⁶ The People's Party also submitted an open letter to the Union Election Commission on September 11 to postpone the election until December 11. They argued that gathering people to vote was too much of a risk of spreading the virus, and due to this, it's would make free and fair elections difficult.³⁷

According data collected by HURFOM, although eligible voters are worried about COVID-19, they will still go vote on the Election Day.³⁸

"I am worried about COVID-19, but I do not want to not vote because of COVID-19. I will vote by different choices," said a female villager, 32, from Ah-nin village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Another female villager from Ah-Nin, 32, also said, "I will protect myself and not get the virus and go vote."

"The villagers are all from our village, so there is no need to worry. I have never thought that I would not go vote because of COVID-19," said a female villager, 60, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

"I am afraid of COVID-19, but what can I do? When other people go vote, I also have to do so. It is a must to go vote, so I have to go. Yes, I am worried about COVID-19," said a 46-year-old female villager, 46, from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

According to a virtual meeting on August 5, 2020, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi instructed the UEC to provide guidelines giving voters enough time at polling

35 ဒေါ်အောင်ဆန်းစုကြည် ကော့ဖူးမဲဆွယ်ခရီးစဉ် ဖျက်သိမ်း - စက်တင်ဘာ ၇၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန

36 ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကို နိုင်ငံရေးအကျပ်အတည်းမတွေ့နိုင်သည့် ဒီဇင်ဘာလကုန်အထိ ရွှေ့ဆိုင်း၍ရဟု ဦးကိုကြီး ဆို - စက်တင်ဘာ ၉၊ ၂၀၂၀ - မြန်မာတိုင်းမ်နေ့စဉ်

37 လူစုလူဝေးကြောင့် ရောဂါကူးစက်မှု ပိုမိုများပြားလာနိုင်ခြင်းနှင့် လွတ်လပ်ပြီးတရားမျှတသော ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဖြစ်ရန် ခဲယဉ်းခြင်းတို့ကြောင့် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကို ရွှေ့ဆိုင်းသင့်ကြောင်း ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်ထု ပြည်သူ့ရှေ့ဆောင်ပါတီ (PPP)က အိတ်ဖွင့်ပေးစာ ပေးပို့ - စက်တင်ဘာ ၁၁၊ ၂၀၂၀ - Eleven Media Group

38 စစ်တမ်းကောက်ယူချိန်တွင် မွန်ပြည်နယ်၌ ဒေသတွင်းကူးစက်မှု မရှိသလောက်နည်းပါးနေချိန် ဖြစ်သည်။

stations, according to the COVID-19 prevention rules, as well as to have voters line up 6 feet apart from another.³⁹

According to U Hein Linn Htet, the Secretary of the Mon State Election Sub-Commission, those who are in quarantine centers due to COVID-19 or admitted to hospital can cast advanced votes.

“Those who have stayed in quarantine are similar to [the situation of] those who have been admitted to hospitals. As they are under the Ministry of Health [protocols they are assumed to be patients], and the voting laws allow them to cast their advanced ballots,” said U Hein Linn Htet, the Secretary of the Mon State Election Sub-Commission.⁴⁰



³⁹ ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲ တစ်နိုင်ငံလုံးမှာ မဲစာရင်းမှားလို့ ကန့်ကွက်သူ လေးသိန်းကျော် ရှိ - ဩဂုတ် ၅၊ ၂၀၂၀ - BBC News

⁴⁰ Those who were in quarantine due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, still have right to cast advance ballots - July 22 - 2020 - HURFOM



Chapter (5) Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Myanmar ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on December 7, 2010.⁴¹

The Union Hluttaw approved the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on June 5, 2015.⁴² The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement released the PWD right acts on December 27, 2017.⁴³

41 မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ အမျိုးသားလူ့အခွင့်အရေးကော်မရှင်

42 နိုင်ငံတော်သမ္မတရုံး

43 လူမှုဝန်ထမ်း၊ ကယ်ဆယ်ရေးနှင့် ပြန်လည်နေရာချထားရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ လူမှုဝန်ထမ်းဦးစီးဌာန



The Act also specifies that PWDs can participate in politics equally as other people.⁴⁴ Articles (29) and (30) of the Chapter (8) state that PWDs have the right to vote. Article (31-A) articulates that the UEC should collaborate for the PWDs to be able to vote effortlessly.⁴⁵

According to the 2014 Census, there were 2.3 million PWDs in Myanmar, approximately 4.6% of the entire country's population.⁴⁶ Mon State, which has a population of over 2 million people, has 109,298 PWDs, which is 5.3% of the entire population of the state.⁴⁷

According to U Myat Thu Win, of the ShweMinthar Foundation, across Myanmar, there are over 100,000 PWDs.⁴⁸

According to the Chair of Mon State's PWD Association, there are over 26,000 PWDs in Mon State in 2020. But the Mon State Election Sub-Commission recognizes only 4,070 PWDs in the state.⁴⁹

44 မသန်စွမ်းသူများ၏ အခွင့်အရေးဥပဒေ အခန်း (၃) ပုဒ်မ (၃-ဃ)

45 မသန်စွမ်းသူများ၏ အခွင့်အရေးဥပဒေ အခန်း (၈)

46 အလုပ်သမား၊ လူဝင်မှုကြီးကြပ်ရေးနှင့် ပြည်သူ့အင်အားဝန်ကြီးဌာန

47 ၂၀၁၄ သန်းခေါင်စာရင်း

48 မန္တလေးတိုင်းရှိ မသန်စွမ်းမဲဆန္ဒရှင်အတွက် စံပြမဲရုံများ တည်ဆောက်မယ်၊ ဩဂုတ် ၂၅၊ ၂၀၂၀၊ မြန်မာတိုင်းမ်နေ့စဉ်

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Due to the lack of documentation on matters of citizenship for PWDs, it's difficult to collect data concerning the number of PWDs in Mon State, not to mention other states and regions within Myanmar.

“PWDs do not have an exact date of birth. They also do not have ID cards. The department does not issue ID cards for them. On the voting list, there are only over 4,000 PWDs voters. But, when we informed [the number was much higher], the Township Election Commission's reply was, “the PWDs group must gather the exact number of PWDs,” said U Saw Aung Thein Thin, Chair of Mon State's PWD Association, in an interview with HURFOM on August 20.

Persons with disabilities voiced a number of difficulties, barriers, and challenges to HURFOM when participating in elections. HURFOM's Field Team interviewed PWDs throughout six townships during its field survey. Those difficulties, barriers, and challenges are unveiled in this chapter.

A) Lack of Citizenship Identity Documents

Most of the PWDs the HURFOM Field Team interviewed did not have documents declaring proof of citizenship.

Applying for ID cards and household documents can be challenging for PWDs, as these documents were not issued early on and often not pursued by their families. Thus, the majority of PWDs do not have such documents.

“I do not have my name on the voter list. My family members do. I have never voted. This is because I do not have an ID card. I cannot vote because I do not have an ID card, right? To have an ID card, everyone who wants to, has to apply and provide everything in detail. It is not easy for PWDs to go and apply. I do not have an ID card. I do not have my name on the household document too,” said a 42-year-old woman who has physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Moreover, PWDs often must have someone help them go to the relevant government departments, but their family members make a living on subsistence farming or daily wage labor and they too struggle, faced with the day-to-day reality of generating an income, leaving little time for the family to help them apply for documentation or admittance on the voter registration list.

“In the past, my parents did not understand this. When I had children, they also cannot walk. I am occupied with helping them. I do not have time for the ID card and household document registration,”



said a 42-year-old woman, who has physical disorder affecting her hands and legs, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“PWDs do not have their names on household documents. Since they have disabilities, it is not convenient for them to travel to the [government] departments for registration. So, I want to request that administrators talk to the department officials to go to the field and register for them,” said U Win Cho, Chair of Mudon Township’s PWD Association.

In addition to not having citizenship documents, without proper attention and support from PWDs’ families and the government department officials, the PWDs lose their civic and political rights.

“I do not have an ID card, so my name is not on the voter list. My mom and family members have their names on the list. But I have applied for the ID card,” said a 19-year-old young man, who has physical disorder affecting his hands and legs, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Although the PWDs interviewed did not have their names included on the voter list, since they did not have documents proving their citizenship, they expressed a desire to vote and exercise their rights.

“Our family members have not checked the voter list yet. I do not know yet whether my name is on the list or not. I do not have an ID card. I have just applied for the ID document at the Ward Administration Office. I want to vote,” said a 27-year-old man, who has a visual disorder, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

B) Lack of Access to Information on the Election

According to data collected by the Field Team through interview conducted with PWDs, there has been no election-related information released specifically targeted for PWDs.

In Myanmar, there are four types of PWDs: physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and intellectual disability.⁵⁰ Of them, people with visual impairments have the most challenge in accessing election information. They have only the radio to rely on to access information.

In Mon State, people with visual impairments make up the highest number of PWDs and count for 3% out of the state's population.⁵¹ If no information is provided specifically for them, 3% of voters will lose their rights, and their votes be abstained.

According to U Saw Thein Tint, Chair of the Mon State Physically Handicapped Association, "Those with visual impairments may need ballot papers written in Braille. If their helper casts the vote against their will, they will lose their vote."⁵²

"Regarding election information, I get it from listening to the radio. I heard from the radio that the election will be held on November 8. I cannot remember the rest. I just forget. I have some difficult with access to information...I am also busy with my job, and I only listen to the radio sometimes. I am working at a massage service in Mawlamyine City as a masseuse," said a 27-year-old PWD, who is visually impaired, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Although PWDs have access to information through other mediums, such as the Internet and the radio, as well as from the community, administration offices, and election sub-commissions, there are still obstacles to obtaining accurate information in a timely manner.

"I got the news from the internet. I have heard [the news] in the village. But I am not sure whether it is true or not. But if the Ward Administrators come to inform us only when the election is near, this is not good," said a 49-year-old villager from Kwan Ngan village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

50 ပထမအကြိမ် ပြည်သူ့လွှတ်တော် ပဉ္စမပုံမှန်အစည်းအဝေး - နိုဝင်ဘာ ၇၊ ၂၀၁၂

51 ၂၀၁၄ သန်းခေါင်စာရင်း

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“I received the information about the election from my phone. I do not have any difficulties. I can see things and can walk. So, there are no difficulties,” said U Win Cho, Chairperson of the Mudon Township PWD Association.

Apart from people with visual impairments, other types of PWDs, who do not use the Internet, also have limited access to information on the election.

“I did not get any news. I do not know about the Election Day either. It's difficult to get news. I am alone at home. I do not go out and I know nothing. I do not use the Internet,” said a 37-year-old man, with psychical disorder, from Kyaikmayaw Township.

HURFOM urges that, as the PWDs Rights Act specifies that PWDs are granted equal rights to participate in other equal organizations in any sector,⁵³ including politics, it is necessary for the UEC to take special consideration for PWDs to have access to election information like other voters. Thus, it is necessary to provide such information through particular means that PWDs can access.

In doing so, their votes will not be abstained, and they will be able to participate in the election, fulfilling the UEC's slogan: “holding the election freely and fairly”.

“I heard about the election news from the radio. Last time, the Ward Administrator came to announce the day of the vote. Then, I will go vote. There won't be any problem”, said a 57-year-old man, who has a visual impairment, from Mudon Township, Mon State.

⁵³ မသန်စွမ်းသူများ၏ အခွင့်အရေးဥပဒေ အခန်း (၂) ရည်ရွယ်ချက်များ

C) Lack of Access to Voter Education Trainings

The majority of PWDs that the HURFOM Field Team interviewed had never attended any voter education/election-related awareness training.

“I do not know about in other townships. There was no training in our township,” said a 37-year-old man from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

Since, the 2008 Constitution was approved, there have been two elections held. Now, with the 2020 Elections, PWDs have yet to be engaged in any of the voter education trainings, and once again, are being left behind.

“I have never seen such a training provided for PWDs,” said a 40-year-old with disabilities from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

Since the voter education trainings provided to PWDs was only at the state level, the numbers of participants were very low. They failed to provide trainings at the township and ward/village level, so the impact has not been effective.

“When I was invited to join the training in Mon State as a township representative, I joined. They provided a stipend for traveling and a meal. But the township [officials] are not able to provide such service. For example, I already joined the training, so if I provided such a training when I got back around the township, the township [officials] will be unable to provide a stipend for meals and transportation. So, because they cannot provide that, no training was provided,” said U Win Cho, Chair of Mudon Township’s PWDs Association.



Not having access to voter education trainings will have a significantly negative impact on PWDs’ ability and right to vote.

On March 28, 2018, President U Win Myint was elected but with four abstained votes, even at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. So, votes from

PWDs will be more likely become abstained/invalid votes.

“No training was provided. We can see that the votes will become abstained since no training was provided,” said a 49-year-old male villager with a disability from Kwan Ngan village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

HURFOM urges the UEC and CSOs to consider providing voter education trainings to PWDs as well when they conduct regular voter workshops.

D) Voting Challenges

In the upcoming General Election, there will not be separate polling stations for voters with disabilities in Mon State. However, according to U Hein Lin Htet, the Secretary of the Mon State Election Sub-Commission, staff members will be able to assist them.⁵⁴

The Mon State Election Sub-Commission also stated that there will be advanced voting for PWDs, senior citizens, and unhealthy people and their family members or anyone who assists them in casting their votes.

However, HURFOM's interviews showed that most PWDs had never voted previously in any election. Since they do not have any documentation supporting proof of citizenship, they often felt reluctant to vote.

“My family members have not checked the voter list yet, so I am not sure whether my name is there or not. I do not have an ID card either. I have applied for it and submitted an application to the Ward Administration Office,” said a 27-year-old resident with visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I did not see my name on the voter list. My family members' names are on the list. I have never voted before because I do not have an ID card. If I do not have an ID card, I cannot vote, right?” said a 42-year-old female resident who has physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“So far, no one from my family has checked the voter list yet,” said a 57-year-old male resident with a visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

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If assistance is provided for PWDs to be able to vote, they would be able to participate in the election just others.

“We’ve formed a youth group in our village. When the voters’ list is announced, they will tell villagers to go and check the list. And they will help villagers to correct and amend the voters’ list,” said Nai Mon Saw Noal, the Village Administrator for Naing Hlone village, Mudon Township, Mon State.⁵⁵

Having to line up to cast a ballot at polling stations but having no one to assist them is another challenge PWDs face when voting in the election.

“We have to line up like ordinary people to vote. The PWDs with crutches will have difficulty because they have to stand the whole day. It is not convenient to carry people who are unable to walk to the polling station. So, if we do not go vote it won’t be busy and family members also do not have to bother,” said a 40-year-old male with a physical disorder from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

“One thing that is not convenient is that we have to line up at the polling station like other [ordinary] people. Another thing is that it is difficult to travel to the polling station from home,” said a 19-year-old male resident with a physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

The PWDs stated they did not have experience with voting and had never participated in voter education. Hence, they did not know how to vote in the election.

“I do not know how to vote. This year is the first time that I will start to vote,” said a 19-year-old male resident with a physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I also did not get to vote in the previous elections. I have never voted. My family has to struggle for a living. I do not have time to go vote,” said a 27-year-old resident with a visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

“I went to vote in 2015 election. No difficulty at all. The staff at the polling station helped us. I told them verbally for the party that I wanted to vote for, and they put the stamp in my hand and pressed the ballot. Then, they took

me back to my family. No difficult at all,” said a 57-year-old male resident with a visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Respective organizations have full responsibility to help PWDs exercise their right to vote if they so wish and apply their rights as citizens equally as others.

“If there is someone willing to help take me to the polling station, I will go vote,” said a 27-year-old man who has a visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

E) Lack of Interest in PWD Issues by Candidates

Interviewed PWDs were asked whether they thought the candidates would take an interest in advocating for PWDs’ rights and issues. Most felt that the candidates would not have an interest in advancing PWD policies; on the other hand, many stated that they did not know whether a candidate would, revealing a lack of knowledge about the candidates in general.

Overall, they felt excluded from the election, since political parties do not include PWDs in their election platforms and strategy plans, and they do not actively seek to engage PWDs during election campaign activities.

“When the candidates conduct campaign activities, they also say they will work for the farmers and build road and bridges. But they never talk about working for our rights. Are they forgetting us?” said U Win Cho, Chair of Mudon Township PWD Association.

“I do not think the candidates will have policies for the PWDs. This is because the Hluttaw representatives do not have much contact with PWDs, and I do not think they will have interest in us,” said a 40-year-old resident with physical disorder from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

According to the interviewees, the PWDs are interested in the election, and they hope to vote for candidates that will work to advance their rights.

“In Kyaikmayaw, the last government administration was not interested in presenting to the Hluttaw about the needs of PWDs. It is just with hope that the candidate that we vote for will be able to push for our needs,” said a 55-year-old male resident with a visual impairment from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

“The party that I vote for will work for policies that grant equal rights to us just as to other [ordinary] people,” said a 19-year-old resident with a physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

In Chapter (6) of the election COC on political parties’ and candidates’ diversity and all-inclusiveness, “...political parties must do their best for PWDs not to be discriminated against, but to have equal rights in all areas for PWDs.” Political parties and candidates should not disregard but prioritize PWDs’ rights when they draw-up policy and guidelines.

F) Interest and Expectations Regarding the Election

While PWDs face challenges accessing proof of citizenship, election information, and voter education training and are confronted with obstacles in traveling to polling stations and the voting process, despite these barriers, they expressed an interest in the election and wanted to exercise their right to vote.



“I have an interest in politics....not much. This is because they have difficulties with earning [a living]. We are busy with our family matters,”

said a 40-year-old male resident with a physical disorder from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

“A PWD’s one vote is also equal and has value. There are lots of PWDs who have to use wheelchairs but listen to news and read,” said U Saw Thein Thint, Chair of the Mon State Physically Handicapped Association.⁵⁶

“I am interested in politics and want to vote...but I do not have an ID card, and there is no chance for me to vote,” said a 42-year-old female resident with a physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State.

The PWDs are not only interested in politics, but they also hope that the Hluttaw and government representatives will put in effort and work for their rights.

“Which parties have worked for PWDs or are working for PWDs? I will vote for the candidates that will work for the rights of PWDs as stated in the law,”

said U Win Cho, Chair of the Mudon Township Physically Handicapped Association, as he expressed his desire and hope.

“We want the candidates who we vote for to work for PWDs’ rights. We want the candidates that will work for real,” said a 40-year-old resident with a physical disorder from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

G) Mental Well-Being

From analyzing the data, HURFOM discovered that the PWDs interviewed for this report feel that they will be left out or their votes invalidated when it comes to the elections.

HURFOM believes that, until PWDs are taken seriously by government departments when applying for citizenship documents and affixing their names on household documents, and until departments aid PWDs in easily applying and receiving such documents, they will lose their civil and political rights which enshrine their right to participate in electoral procedures.

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UEC to provide assistance for voters with disabilities – June 23, 2020 - HURFOM

“PWDs do not have an exact date of births. They do not have ID cards. The government department did not issue ID cards for them,”

said U Saw Aung Thein tint, Chair of the Mon State PWD Association in an interview with HURFOM.

“I do not have my name on the voter list. My family has. I have never voted. This is because I do not have an ID card,”

said a 42-year-old woman, with physical disorder, from Mudon Township.

“In the past, my parents did not understand this. When I have children as they also cannot walk, I am occupied with helping them. I do not have time for the ID card and household document registering,” a 42-years-old woman, who has physical disorder, from Mudon Township.

Persons with disabilities had worse feelings as they did not have voter education or receive targeted information on the election, leading to worries that they would be left out.



A lack of interest by political parties and candidates in PWD issues without advocating for their rights coupled with rarely engaging in contact with them, would make it more likely that PWDs would not on Election Day.

“I do not think the candidates will have policies for PWDs. This is because the Hluttaw representatives do not have contact much with PWDs, and I do not think they will have interest in us,” said a 40-year-old resident from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

H) Requests and Suggestions

The UEC stated that those who do not have ID cards but are listed on the voter list will be able to vote. However, it appears that PWDs are not on the voting list, and it is because they do not have ID cards. Because of this and a lack of household documents, which adds extra support for proof of citizenship, they are not listed on the voter list and, thus, they will also lose other rights.

“Another thing is that most of PWDs do not have ID cards. I would like the department to issue IDs for them. Having disabilities, it won't be okay to go to the department and apply for an ID card. So, for that, I would like to request the administrators should inform the department and have them travel to the field and issue the ID documents,” said U Win Cho, Chair of the PWD Association, Mudon Township, Mon State.

It is also necessary to provide information specifically for PWDs, as well as to provide targeted voter education training for PWDs.

“What voters with visual impairments really need are ballot papers written in Braille,” said U Saw Thein Tint, Chair of the Mon State PWD Association.⁵⁷

“[We need to] have trainings for us to be able to vote and someone who can help us go vote,” said a 27-year-old male resident with a visual impairment from Mudon Township, Mon State.

Moreover, there are significant inconveniences for PWDs to be able to vote when accessing polling stations by travel and following voting procedures.

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“For people like us, it is not convenient to line up for a long time at the polling station. Another thing is that it is difficult for us to reach the polling station from home,” said a 19-year-old resident with a physical disorder from Mudon Township, Mon State. “I would like the staff at polling stations to help provide a path for PWDs using wheelchairs. Another thing is to let PWDs with one leg vote within a short time, as they cannot line up like other [normal] people,” continued the 19-year-old.

The Mandalay Region Election Sub-Commission Secretary U Kyaw Kyaw Soe said that model polling stations for PWDs in Mandalay Region will be installed for PWDs to be able to vote conveniently.⁵⁸

However, the Mon State Election Sub-Commission Chair U Hein Lin Thet said that there won't be any polling stations specifically for PWDs in Mon State,⁵⁹ despite the Mon State Election Sub-Commission previously stating that advanced voting would be provided to PWDs.

Chapter (9), Article (45-C) of The Law Relating to the Region or State Hluttaw states that if persons residing in the constituency who are unable to come to the polling station to vote in person due to any of the following reasons and still desire to vote, the Ward or Village Tract Sub-Commission concerned shall arrange for them to vote with advanced ballot papers as prescribed: (i) having contracted leprosy; (ii) being seriously ill; (iii) being of old age; (iv) giving birth; (v) being detained in police custody or in prison; (vi) under medical in-patient treatment at a hospital; (vii) a civil services personnel, Defense Services personnel or members of the Police Force who are on temporary duty and away from their local voting roll.

During interviews, PWDs expressed that providing them with the opportunity to cast advanced votes would be more convenient for them.

“If we can do advanced voting, it would be good. If we do not have to line up at the polling station like [normal] people, it is more convenient. It can be order to door voting or having polling station (for PWDs) is good. Some PWDs cannot walk. I think if door-to-door voting is provided, it will be convenient for us,” said U Win Cho, Chair of the Mudon Township PWD Association.

58 မန္တလေးတိုင်းရှိ မသန်စွမ်းမဲဆန္ဒရှင်အတွက် စံပြမဲရုံများ တည်ဆောက်မည် - ဩဂုတ် ၂၅၊ ၂၀၂၀ - မြန်မာတိုင်းမ်နေ့စဉ်
59 UEC to provide assistance for voters with disabilities - June 23, 2020 - HURFOM

“If advanced voting is provided, it is convenient for us. If they do so, it will be more convenient for people like us, who cannot see,”

said a 57-year-old male resident from Mudon Township, Mon State, who has a visual disorder.

“For us who can walk, we cannot do advanced vote. We have to travel to the polling station and vote. If we can do advanced vote, it's good,”

said a 37-year-old male resident, who has to use a crutch to walk, from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

“The Ward Administrator has said that advanced voting will be organized for those who cannot travel to the polling station, but it is not a polling station for PWDs specifically. It will be more convenient to have advanced voting for people like us,” said a 40-year-old male resident from Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State, who has a physical disorder

HURFOM believes that, as prescribed by the UEC, assistance must be provided to PWDs to be able to vote, and the UEC must acknowledge the difficulties PWDs face and provide assistance in overcoming the obstacles to exercising their civic rights.





Chapter (6) Challenges Faced by First-Time Youth Voters

Myanmar is expected to have 4.8 million eligible first-time youth voters for the 2020 Election. Mon State has over 1.7 million eligible voters, and among them, there are over 100,000 first-time youth voters.⁶⁰

The HURFOM Field Team conducted interviews with first-time youth voters to determine the challenges and barriers they will face in the election and the expectations they have for the upcoming election.

A) Interest in the Election

There is still a lack of interest in politics and the election with young people in Myanmar. According to youth activists, more young people are becoming addicted to drugs, social media, and online games, hence, they are diverted from forming an interest in politics.

⁶⁰ ဗွန်ပြည်နယ် မဲစာရင်းမှာ အမည်မပါလို့ ပြန်လည်လျှောက်ထားသူ (၂၁၀၀၀) ကျော်ရှိ - ဩဂုတ် ၁၆၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမ်

“I haven’t even checked the voter list yet. I want to vote. As it’s the first time for me, I don’t know how to vote. Some young people in my village don’t have their ID cards. If we don’t have ID cards, we might lose our voting rights. We have this kind of problem,” said an 18-year-old girl from Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.⁶¹

There are many reasons why young people do not vote including lack of interest, lack ID cards, and the belief that just one vote won’t be a problem.⁶²

“Our Village Administrator has been advocating to people with loudspeakers to check the voter list. When I urged my relatives to go and check the list, they replied, ‘Why do we have to care about the voter list? When a candidate is elected, only their relatives and family members profit. They do nothing for us’. Most of the villagers think in a similar way, so they don’t keep the voter list in mind,” said Mi Seik Non, an activist from Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State, who is urging more youth engagement in the election.⁶³

In order to have first-time youth voters become interested in the election, the UEC, government, and political parties should develop a youth engagement policy and implement it accordingly. In addition, CSOs should advocate for youth to participate in the election and provide any necessary services to enable them to do so.

“Since it is not election campaigning time yet, the committee has not started providing training to the public yet. We’ve already trained young people in each township, and they’ll educate and advocate for the other young people in their villages. We’ll also provide training on how to cast a vote,” explained Mi Zin Win Mon, a member of the Mon State Youth Affairs Committee.⁶⁴

61 Mon State Youth Affairs Committee launches voter education campaign – August 19, 2020 - HURFOM

62 ပထမဆုံးအကြိမ် မဲပေးရမည့် လူငယ်များအား ဆော်ဩစည်းရုံးပြီး မြန်မာ့အနာဂတ်အတွက် ရင်းနှီးမြှုပ်နှံခြင်း - ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၁၂-၂၀၂၀ - ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန

63 Interest in politics declines as election promises go unfulfilled – July 30, 2020 - HURFOM

64 Mon State Youth Affairs Committee launches voter education campaign – August 19, 2020 - HURFOM

B) Access to Election Information



Although young people today have access to modern technology, it does not appear that this translates into accessing sufficient information regarding the election. Community youth members indicated they accessed election information from village administrators first (75%) and social media (50%) second.

“I get information from the administrator. I also get various news from the Internet,” said a 22-year-old villager from Ah-Nin village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Facebook, which is widely used in Myanmar, was rated at 55% of the number of interviews, and of them, only 30% knew of the UEC’s Facebook page, while approximately 13% checked the UEC’s Facebook page regularly.

“I heard about the election related news mostly from social media. I also got the news from the administrator. From TV, I have watched the discussions on the election,” said a 23-year-old villager from ThoneMan village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

According to the interviews conducted by the HURFOM Field Team, although the majority of young people living in government-controlled areas could access information related to the election in one form or another, four of the eligible first-time youth voters that HURFOM met from KalockKani, KyaikSoiMon, and BalehDonPhat villages, under the NMSP control, said they have difficulties in accessing election information.

“I live in an area where I have to rely on the radio, and sometimes I listen to radio channels from the BBC and VOA [Voice of America] about the election. Here, we have internet access if we climb up to a high mountain where we have teleservice access from Thailand. So, I do not get to check news from Facebook, regularly. Although I want to vote...on November 8, I still do not

know who the candidate is yet. I do not know the voting procedures. I have to say that it will be difficult to vote, as I do not know the procedures,” said a 20-year-old male villager, from Kyauk Bilu Mae village tract, Three Pagoda Pass Sub-Township, Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State.

A young female villager from Kalockkani village and a young male villager from SeikSoiMon village expressed that their remoted, geographical location limited access to electoral information. However, in early September, two members from one political party came to distribute pamphlets and knowledge regarding several of the candidates.

In this election, the same four villages that HURFOM Team interviewed for HURFOM’s report on the 2015 Election, “Ballot Denied”, still have not received election-related information and education.

The sources for election information for this election were also accessible. Particularly, having no voter education training for people in remote areas appear to be left out to compare with international standard as the government has to provide voter education. It is not just the government but ethnic armed organizations which have to support people in remote areas to be able to vote, and help cooperate by advocating for locals to become interested in the election.



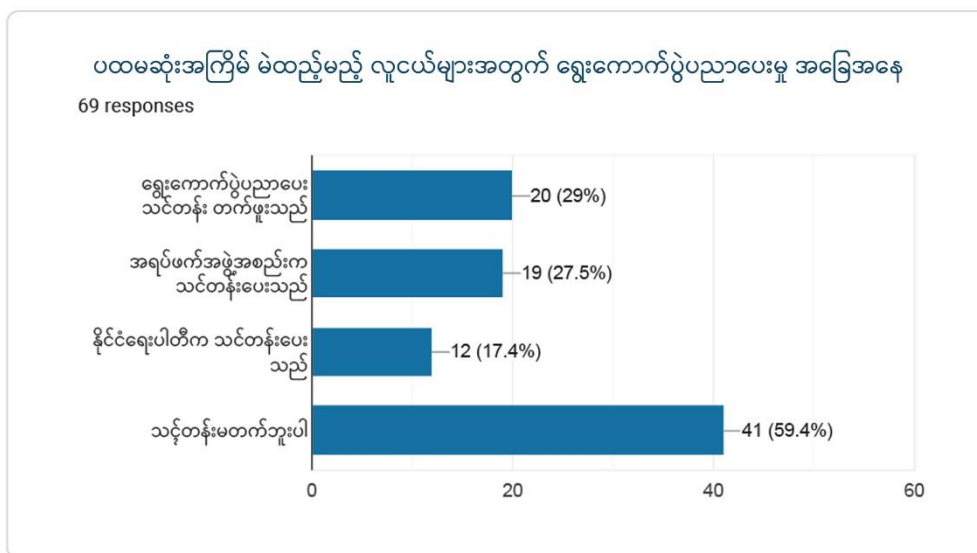
C) Election/Voting Education/Awareness-Raising

According to the survey, the main challenges that first-time youth voters are facing are a lack of election education training and knowledge regarding the process of voting.⁶⁵ Only 20% of interviewees said they had joined an electoral workshop.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdowns and travel restrictions, the voter education trainings have not been provided as much as in previous elections. Young people voting in this election may face challenges due a lack of education around the election and voting procedures.

“I have not seen any trainings given yet. But I have heard that there will be one candidate who will give a training on the voting process,” said an 18-year-old woman, from Kwan Ngan village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

HURFOM is concerned that first-time youth voters may be left behind, since the voting lists released on July 25 were full of errors. From the data collected for this report, more than 55% of first-time voters interviewed said their names were on the list.



⁶⁵ မွန်ပြည်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း စစ်တမ်းကောက်ယူချိန်တွင် မဲဆွယ်စည်းရုံးရေးကာလ မသတ်မှတ်ရသေးသည့်အပြင် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ ပညာပေးအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ စတင်လှုပ်ရှားခြင်း မရှိသေးသည့်အတွက် ထိုသို့ဖြစ်နေသည်ဟု ယူဆနိုင်သည်။

“I have an ID card. I also have a household document. I myself have not checked the voting list yet. My mother checked it. My name is on the voting list,” said an 18-year-old female villager from Hpar Chaung, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

Even if an eligible first-time youth voter found that their name was not on the voter registration list, many stated that they did not find it that difficult to re-apply for registration.

“I went to check if my name was on the voting list. I did not see it. At first, I decided that I would not vote as I did not see my name. But the administrator said if I do not vote, our nationality will lose one vote. So, I re-applied for it. There was no problem when I reapplied,” said a 24-year-old woman from Yetha Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.



Of all the people that HURFOM conducted interviews with, less than 20% participated in voter education trainings. More than half of the interviewees also answered that they did not know how to vote in order to ensure their votes were not abstained.

“I have never joined any trainings. I have heard about the trainings, but I did not get to join,” said a 23-year-old female villager from Domar village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

Many first-time youth voters stated that they had never experienced voter education training and that they did not know the voting procedures either.⁶⁶

“I do not know the voting procedures. I have never voted,” said an 18-year-old female villager from Kwan Ngan village, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

⁶⁶ မွန်ပြည်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း စစ်တမ်းကောက်ယူချိန်တွင် မဲဆွယ်စည်းရုံးရေးကာလ မသတ်မှတ်ရသေးသည့်အပြင် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ ပညာပေးအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ စတင်လှုပ်ရှားခြင်း မရှိသေးသည့်အတွက် ထိုသို့ဖြစ်နေသည်ဟု ယူဆနိုင်သည်။

“I do not know how to cast my vote so that my vote is not abstained. I do not know how many ballots I should cast,” said a 23-year-old female villager, from Domar village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

“Because I have not voted before, I do not know how to cast a ballot so that it does become an abstained vote. I do not know how many ballots I should cast. But I heard that we have to cast a vote three times,” said a 25-year-old male villager from Yethae Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Amid the number of people interested in the elections has dropped, the young people become less interested in the election since the first-time youth voters did not know the voting procedure and their votes could become abstained votes.

HURFOM suggests that the UEC should announce the voting procedures as early as possible⁶⁷ and provide voter education training as geographically far reaching as possible. In addition, CSOs should target first-time voters when they provide voter education training.



67 ၂၀၂၀ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲတွင် မဲပေးရမည့်ပုံစံကို ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရန် ၂၅ အလို စက်တင်ဘာလ (၁၁) ရက်နေ့မှသာ ထုတ်ပြန်ကြေညာခဲ့သည်။

D) COVID-19 Crisis



Due to COVID-19, there has been no special response the young people regarding the election. The majority of the interviewees told the HURFOM Field Team that they would go vote on Election Day despite the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19.⁶⁸

“The disease is the disease. When Election Day comes, we will go vote,” said a female villager, 24, from Ya Thae Taung village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

“COVID...yes, I am afraid of COVID-19. The poll station staff must wash their hands and wear masks. If they do so, we will go vote. We will follow the rules for the voting,” said a female villager, 23, Domar village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

As Election Day draws near and the number of COVID-19 cases increases, the UEC and the Ministry of Health and Sports should have practical rules in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among voters. Moreover, adequate materials protecting against COVID-19 infection should be provided.

⁶⁸ မွန်ပြည်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း စစ်တမ်းကောက်ယူချိန်တွင် မွန်ပြည်နယ်၌ ပြည်တွင်းကူးစက်မှု မရှိသလောက်နည်းပါးနေသည့်အချိန် ဖြစ်သည်။

E) Expectations from the Elections

As mentioned above, young people lack an interest in participating in the election as they feel their votes won't bring any change. HURFOM also asked first-time youth voters about their expectations regarding the 2020 Election.

"I will go vote for the 2020 Election. I want a good leader," said an 18-year-old woman from Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

"To have peace in our country, I will go vote," said a 21-year-old female villager, from Hpa-Chaung Inn village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

"I will go vote for a Mon candidate so the Mon candidates have more votes because I am Mon. I believe that because they are Mon representatives, they will work for Mon people," said a 21-year-old female villager from ThoneMan village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

"I will go vote in this 2020 election. I think, if the Mon candidates win, we could create our destiny. The last term's representatives did not do much for the community," said a 23-year-old female villager, from Domar village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

"I will go vote in the 2020 election. With my vote, if our village becomes better, it will be for me too," said a 22-year-old male villager from Ahnin village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.



It can be concluded that based on the interviews with young people, they expect to have good government, peace in their ward/village, self-determination, and local development.

In summary, HURFOM observed that all respective organizations involved in the election should pay attention to first-time youth voters, who

also fall in the category of potentially being left behind. The political parties and candidates should pay special attention to the expectations of the youth.



Chapter (7) Challenges Faced by Communities in Areas Controlled by Ethnic Armed Organizations

Out of the six townships that HURFOM collected data in for this report, areas of Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State, Ye Township, Mon State, and Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region are under the control of EAOs. A large number of people residing in these areas are eligible voters.

The EAOs in those townships are groups that have already signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and have participated in the Union Peace Conference (21st Century Conference). HURFOM strongly believes that the people residing in these areas have the right to vote, and the Field Team specifically set-out to discover the challenges they face when participating in elections.

It is worth noting that the difficulties that people living in areas controlled by EAOs face are different from those who live in the areas controlled by the government.



“As we live under the NMSP, everything depends on their decisions. If they said villagers are able to vote, we’ll cast our vote. If they say no, we dare not. But we haven’t heard anything yet. But I wish my villagers will cast their votes,” said a village administrator from the NMSP-controlled area in Tavoy District.⁶⁹

Local CSOs are working hard help the public living in areas controlled by EAOs be able to vote.

“We’re helping people in Ye Chaung Phyar region exercise their right to vote. I think

they will get a chance to cast their votes in this election. But there is no voter education and training,” noted Nai Lwin, a resident from Ye Town.⁷⁰

There are many requirements and challenges for people there to be able to vote.

“We’ve already prepared everything to collect for the voters’ lists. Also, we’ve talked with the NMSP about security issues. But the local election sub-commission and the government authorities have done nothing,” said Nai Maung Nyein, a member of the Mon Unity Party (MUP) who works for a Ye Chaung Phyar voter support organization.⁷¹

“We don’t know who is accountable for helping the residents get their voting rights. The government? The NMSP? The MUP? We don’t know who can help the residents to get their voting right,” said Nai Lwin, who is helping locals from the areas controlled by EAOs be able to vote.⁷²

69 Tavoy District residents worry about losing voting right – August 22, 2020 – HURFOM

70 First time voters worry about how to ensure their vote counts in the General Election – July 10, 2020 – HURFOM

71 Voter registration campaign in Ye Chaung Phyar Region suspended – July 23, 2020 – HURFOM

72 Thousands of Ye Chaung Phya residents excluded from voter list – August 8, 2020 – HURFOM



HURFOM first planned to conduct field work and provide workshops in EAO-controlled areas and to meet in person with the interviewees. However, due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Mon State as well as the travel restrictions, the plan had to be cancelled. However, with the support of three local advisors and six trained local volunteers, HURFOM was given the opportunity to obtain the voices of local community members in these areas.

The election situation of the community members in NMSP-controlled areas in Kyawinnseikyi Township, Karen State

In Karen State's Kyainnseikyi Constituency (1) and (2), there are nine village tracts under EAOs' control. The nine village tracts are composed of 36 villages, with a total of 9,000 households and 19,000 families. The population is approximately 40,000 people.

The local people from those areas did not participate in the 2010 Election, and in the 2015 Election, the villagers from only about 3-4 villages traveled to ShweTaung Bo village tract to vote.

Since those areas are under the control of EAOs, the government has marked them as “black zones”, and the ward/village Election Sub-Commission did not put effort in gathering voter registrations. In addition, the local community members, themselves, do not have trust in the election. Hence, they were abstained from the election.



“Whoever is elected, the people who work in rubber plantations will continue to do so. That is how the local people think. So, they have no interest in participating in the vote,” said Nai Aung Mon, a local advisor for HURFOM, from Kyainnseikyi Township.

Also, because they are a minority in the area, there is less of a chance that the candidate that they vote for will get elected. So, this has reduced their interest in participating. However, as the two political parties unified, local youths have advocated for participating in the 2020 Election, and almost 70% of local people have considered.

A) Gathering the Voter List

The NMSP, which controls the Ye Chaung Phyar region, itself does not participate in helping gather information for voter lists and conducting election-related activities, but it does not bar such activities.

To gather the voter list, the Ward/Village Tract Election Sub-Commission members had informal meeting with the NMSP, and the local activists collaborating with the Ward/Village Tract Election Sub-Commission, gathered the voter list.

“There are 16 villages in SeikKaLay village tract. There are about 22,000 eligible voters in the tract. In the first voter list, there were over 18,000 eligible voters. Other 3,000 eligible voters re-apply for the registrations with

Form (3),” said Nai Aung Mon, who is volunteering for the locals to be able to participate in the election.

However, since the voter list posters are not placed in every village, villagers must travel to check the voter list, creating difficulties.

B) Voter Education



“There is not enough information regarding the election for the locals in the region. They also do not have much knowledge of the election. It's also their first-time voting,” said a 54-year-old man from Kyainnseiky Township.

Although the CSOs planned to provide the voter education training to the young people or first-time youth voters in EAO-controlled area in Kyainnseiky Township, they won't be able to do so due to COVID-19 and the subsequent travel restrictions.

HURFOM believes CSOs should provide training to local young people online and provide necessary materials for the

election-related trainings in order for them to provide the trainings to others on their behalf.

“Villagers here don't know how to vote. They're interested in the election...some voters have even requested voter education training. They're worried about knowing how to properly vote, so their ballots are not

deemed invalid,” said a local candidate, Nai Chan Mon, from #2 constituency of Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State.⁷³

It is essential that political parties and CSOs provide election-related awareness trainings and advocate for local community members to know their voting rights and proper voting procedures.

“On our side, there are no organizations that have come to provide such trainings yet. I also have never joined such a training. It’ll be much better if political parties or CSOs come to our area and provide election-related trainings,” said a 40-year-old male villager from Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State.

(c) Challenges Faced when Casting Votes

The main challenge is to encourage local community members to go vote, since the locals were unable to vote for the last to General Elections.

Nai Thein Zaw, Secretary of the Kyainnseikyi Township MUP, noted: “It’s the first time for Kyainnseikyi villagers to exercise their voting rights, and we’re worried people won’t come to the polling stations.”⁷⁴

Although the UEC planned to install one polling station for every three villages, road problems will cause difficulties and the number of polling station will be too few for the number of villagers from hard to reach villages.



⁷³ Candidate says Kyainnseikyi voter education urgently needed for new voters – September 7, 2020 - HURFOM

⁷⁴ Candidate says Kyainnseikyi voter education urgently needed for new voters – September 7, 2020 - HURFOM

“There are 18 villages in SeikKaLay village tract. There will be one polling station for three villages, so there will be six polling stations for 18 villages. Some villages are 5 miles away from the polling station,” said a local from Kyainnseikyi Township.

Some polling stations will be installed at Mon National Schools in villages under the NMSP’s control. However, for the villagers living under the government’s control, they will have to travel to polling stations. For example, voters in ShweTaungPoe village tract will have to travel to KadoSeik village to vote, which is 3 miles away.

“Many of the locals live far from the polling stations. For example, the people living in the IDP camps, such as Kalockkani and BalehDonphat in Kyauk Bilu village tract, will have to travel to the polling station at Kyaikbilu village. For that, it will be 500 Thai Baht to rent a motorbike. If the MUP helps arrange for traveling, other parties will likely complain that the locals are given money to vote or something like that. This also includes the village tract of Pyaung Ma Thein. The villagers from most of the villages, like ThiSone, KyunChaung, Ahnan Kwin, KhoMar, and LutShan, have challenges for traveling. So, I think the number of voters who turn up will be very few. The locals in Three Pagoda Pass will vote. The villagers from ThaDein village also have lots of difficulties. During this COVID-19, people do not want to travel. That is true,” said a 45-year-old male villager from ThaDein village, Three Pagoda Pass Sub-Township.

The staff at the polling stations will be the local schoolteachers, and since it is under the control of EAOs, there will be no police force. Thus, the Township Election Commission has trained local young people to work as reserve policemen who will take charge at the polling stations for security.

Another challenge that the local people are facing is that they do not know how to vote. This will increase the chances that their votes will be invalid, as they do not have voting experience.

He urged political parties and community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide the electorate with voter education and training sessions, so that villagers understand the importance of being involved in elections and know how to vote.



Nai Thein Zaw, Secretary of the Kyainnseikyi Township MUP noted that, “Even if the villagers do go vote, I’m afraid their ballots might be deemed invalid [if they don’t understand how to mark the them].”⁷⁵

In the 2015 Election, 4,000 villagers from ShweTaungBo village tract went to vote, but over 1,000 eligible voters’ ballots were deemed invalid.

The election situation of the community members in NMSP-controlled areas in Ye Township, Mon State

There are 19 villages in the NMSP’s controlled area in Ye Township Constituency (2), Mon State. The NMSP has demarcated the area into two parts: Southern Ye and Ye Chaung Phayar and very near to KyonLong and KyaungYwa village tracts, which are under the government’s control.

According to data collected by local organizations, there are 14,000 eligible voters from 19 villages. Of these 19 villages, 10 in Southern Ye have 12,000 eligible voters, and they voted in the previous 2010 and 2015 elections. However, 2,000 eligible voters from nine villages in the Yechaung Phayar area have never voted before.

75 Candidate says Kyainnseikyi voter education urgently needed for new voters – September 7, 2020 - HURFOM



Although there were no previous polling stations or elections in the YeChaung Phayar region due to the nearby NMSP Headquarters, polling stations were set-up in the region according to the public's desire to participate in the 2008 Constitution.

The NMSP signed the NCA in February 2018 and has been participating in the Union Peace Conference. Yet, the local people living in the area under the NMSP's control have been left out of the elections twice already. Now, CBOs based in Ye Town have been working toward having the people in YeChaung Pyar region to be able to vote in 2020 election.

A) Gathering the Voters List

The Mon political party, the Mon Unity Party, had an informal meeting with the New Mon State Party in the first week of July 2020 in the YeChaung Phayar area to discuss having local people there participate in the election, as they have never voted before.⁷⁶



“We allowed the [election] commission to collect names for the voter list only up to Phlan [village] and they’ve already done it. We haven’t allowed them to enter villages near our headquarters. But if the MUP and CBOs collect the list, we’ll allow them. We don’t block the voting rights of the locals,” said Nai Bnyair Lel, the Chief of NMSP Home Affairs.⁷⁷

After reaching an agreement, local CBOs in Ye Township came together and gathered the voter list. Ten out of 19 villages had permission to vote, and the organizations went ahead to another nine villages and gathered the voter list for four days.

“We’ve collected the voters’ list and gave it to Ye GAD [General Administration Department]. We have to wait and see whether those will be included in the July 15 voters’ list or not. If not, we’ll find the root cause and adopt a future plan. We never give up helping people in the area,” said Nai Lon, a Ye resident, helping locals vote.⁷⁸

According to the collected voter list, there are 2,153 eligible voters in nine villages in the YeChaung Phayar region. The voter list was submitted to Ye Township Election Sub-Commission, and the Sub-Commission inspected the list and approved 2,062 eligible voters. The local organizations planned to travel to the region for second time in order to have complete voter list.

76 Voter registration campaign in Ye Chaung Phyar Region suspended – July 23, 2020 – HURFOM

77 Thousands of Ye Chaung Phya residents excluded from voter list – August 8, 2020 – HURFOM

78 Voter registration campaign in Ye Chaung Phyar Region suspended – July 23, 2020 – HURFOM

B) Voter education

The people in Ye Chaung Phyar region have never voted, neither have they had voter education.

“We’re helping people in Ye Chaung Phyar region to exercise their right to vote. I think they will get a chance to cast their votes in this election. But there is no voter education and training,” noted Nai Loon, a resident from Ye.⁷⁹

The NMSP released a statement on September 11 expressing that due to COVID-19, NMSP’s COVID-19 Protection and Emergency Response Committee did not allow anyone to enter the area, except when relating to health matters.⁸⁰

Because of that restriction, the CSOs, which planned to provide voter education and other trainings related to the elections, have difficulties to conduct trainings in the region.

For the local communities in the region, beside the travel restrictions, the election campaign activities are also banned there.



⁷⁹ First time voters worry about how to ensure their vote counts in the General Election – July 10, 2020 – HURFOM

⁸⁰ COVID-19 ကာလ မွန်ပြည်သစ်ပါတီ ထိန်းချုပ်ဒေသအတွင်း ဝင်ထွက်သွားလာခွင့် ကန့်သတ်ထား (ရုပ်သံဖိုင်) - စက်တင်ဘာ ၁၆၊ ၂၀၂၀ - သံလွင်တိုင်းမီ

C) Challenges in Voting

The main challenge is the long distance from polling stations and harsh road conditions.

Six polling stations were installed in KyaungYwa village tract during the last two elections. However, there were only two polling stations in KyonLaung village tract. Since it required to travel half-day to the polling stations, along the bumpy roads, through the mountains, only a few voters showed up.



According to local organizations, only 48% of eligible voters from KyaungYwa village tract, from southern Ye's 10 villages, voted, and only about tens of voters from Kyon Laung village tract showed up at the polling station.

For the locals in Yechaung Phyar region who were listed on the voter list, to be able to easier vote, the group [led by Nai Lwin] would request the township election



commission to add one polling station in Chethaik Village and 3 polling stations around Kani Village and nearby villages, according to Nai Lwin, a Ye Town resident, who has been supporting for the locals in YeChaung Phyar to be able to vote.

It is necessary to hold meeting with NMSP in order to place the polling stations in the villages, under NMSP's control.

If the local people from YeChaung Phayar region were given the rights to vote, they should be provided with transportation. If not provided, the number of the people showing up at the polling station will be very low.

Another challenge is that since the locals do not have voting experience, most of their votes would become invalid. It would be challenge because they did not get to participate in voter education training and election awareness-raising training.

“Even though they are given the opportunity to vote, most votes will be invalid,” said Nai Lwin, a Ye resident.



The situation of the elections by the locals residing in NMSP's controlled area, Yebyu Township

There are 5 villages under NMSP's Tavoy District control, located eastern Ye-Tavoy highway, YarBuu Village Tract, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region. The villages have 540 households and 2,600 people [population]. However, 50% of the population there is not having ID cards.⁸¹

A) Collecting voter list



The villagers from those five villages voted in 2010 Election and 2015 Election. However, till August 8, there was no voter list gathering in the villages, so the villagers are worried that they would lose their rights to vote.

Also, although the first time of voting list was announced, on July, 25 to August, 14, there was no voting list displayed in those five villages.⁸²

“The (Election) Commission hasn't collected their voter list yet. But they did in the 2015 election. [Since] there has been no declaration of a voter list, villagers are worried about losing their voting right,” said a Village Administrator to the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) on August 8, 2020.⁸³

81 နိုင်ငံသားအခွင့်အရေး မဆုံးရှုံးစေချင် - Civic Action for Free and Fair Election 2020 Project - ဇူလိုင်လ၊ ၂၀၂၀

82 မဲစာရင်း ကြည့်ရှုရက် ၇ ရက်ထပ်တိုး - ဩဂုတ် ၆၊ ၂၀၂၀ - ဧရာဝတီသတင်းဌာန

83 Tavoy District residents worry about losing voting right - August 22, 2020 - HURFOM

B) Voter education

Due to COVID-19, traveling restriction from one village to another village was ordered in NMSP's controlled areas. The NMSP also put the restrictions across 30 villages, under its control, including the 9 villages. Thus, it's difficult to have election campaign activities.

“For 2015 Election, we provided the voter education training in Myauk-Ngo and The-Chaung villages. But this year, so far, we have not heard anything yet,” said a local member of MUP.



Although the local people are interested in voting, it remains unsure that whether they would be able to vote or not for this 2020 election

“It's good if we have a chance to vote in the election. It's nice that we can elect our candidates. But we don't know if we can vote or not. The Village Administrator has said nothing,” said a Ma Raw Chai villager.⁸⁴

C) Voting challenges

There is one of the polling stations in each of three villages, so there are no special challenge to remote villages, except difficult to travel around.

Due to COVID-19, traveling from one village to another village was ordered, when the Election Day is drawing close. Also, since there are domestic case transmission, the local people are worried and reluctant to go and vote at another village.

84

Tavoy District residents worry about losing voting right – August 22, 2020 – HURFOM

The local's right to vote also depends on NMSP (New Mon State Party). NMSP does not allow for the election campaign activities while it also put traveling restriction from one village to another. Hence, [it has] to wait the decision/consideration from NMSP for the local people to be able to vote.

“As we live under the NMSP, everything depends on their decisions. If they said villagers are able to vote, we'll cast our vote. If they say no, we dare not. But we haven't heard anything yet. But I wish my villagers cast their votes,” said a Village Administrator.⁸⁵

To analyze the difficulties and challenges by the people living in EAOs' controlled area, it shows that there is no concrete policy on whether to hold the election or not, drawn by the local EAOs, government and UEC, lack of voter education trainings, long distance to the polling stations or difficulties to road access, and lack of interest and belief in the election.

HURFOM believes that similar to any other citizens in other states and regions, the local people living in areas controlled by EAOs will not left out, because, as stated above, the EAOs have signed the NCA and were removed from unlawful associations by the government, and the EAOs have also participated in the peace process.

Respective authorities should lay down a concrete policy and implement upon that, for the people living under EAOs' controlled area, to be able to participate in the election equally.

“The NMSP requested by letter that we grant NRC cards to the villages in their controlled area. We reported to the Mon State Department of Immigration and Population and after that, the report went to the Mon State government. As this issue is also related to the peace process, a high-ranked official of the NMSP should meet the Mon State government. We don't know what happens next. As the NMSP signed the NCA, they need a recommendation from the President Office, I think. Also we don't know how the Mon State government responds. Anyhow, we'll follow the instruction from the government,” said the official of the Ye Township Department of Immigration and Population.⁸⁶

85 Tavoy District residents worry about losing voting right – August 22, 2020 – HURFOM

86 30% of residents in remote areas do not have National Registration Cards – impacting their right to vote – August 6, 2020 – HURFOM

Chapter (8) Conclusion

HURFOM has studied and analyzed the electoral laws, rules, and political commitments in order not to have abstained votes but to have a free and fair election with participation for all equally. Its Field Team also conducted interviews with a focus on elderly people and women, PWDs, first-time youth voters, and people living under the control of EAOs, who all have higher chances of their votes becoming invalidated.

Myanmar has started to form a democratic system that is leading to a federal system, but it is not enough to just consider having laws, rules, and political commitments which are democratic or not. It should make sure whether such laws, rules, and political commitments are heading to a federal system. Particularly, for minority groups (i.e., non-Bamar), their political parties should not face discrimination and be limited by enacted laws.

Since access to information is still a major challenge in Myanmar, rural communities face limits for their access to election information. Also, there is still not enough voter education training for them. Particularly, due to the COVID-19 crisis, there are restrictions on the gathering of people and difficulties in providing voter education training. There are also errors with the voter list, while there are also difficulties for some villages with harsh road conditions to access polling stations.

Persons with disabilities are the group that face challenges for the election the most. They do not have documents supporting for their citizenship, are left off the voter list, do not have access to election information and voter education training, lack attention from political parties and candidates, and other countless factors related to the election.

Although the first-time youth voters do not have any problems with the election information access, it has become a great concern with their [lack of] interest in the elections. It is necessary to provide voter-education and voting procedure in order for them to become listed on the voter list.

The people living in EAO-controlled areas have faced different difficulties. For them, there are no concrete policies and guideline designed by the local EAOs, government, and UEC. There is also limited election information and voter education trainings, lack of accurate data regarding the population and voter list, harsh transportation (road), far-away polling stations, and a lack of interest and belief in the election.

However, it is necessary to have all-inclusive elections and avoid invalid votes in order to have a free and fair election the per UEC's motto. Knowing the difficulties and challenges of the groups and finding the solutions for them to be able to vote, the establishment of a true democracy and peaceful federal union will be achieved.

Chapter (9) Recommendations

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyidaungsu Government

- To sign the agreement of civil and political rights
- To consider not just a democracy but a federal system in practicing parliamentary and electoral laws and rules.
- To support in full the union election commission for the protection of voters against COVID-19
- To meet with the ethnic armed organizations and to lay down precise policies and guidelines for local community members in areas controlled by EAOs.
- To implement as a project for people with disabilities to have supporting documents related to citizenship

Union Election Commission

- ☐ To include, not just democracy, but a federal system when prescribing and practicing the election laws and rules and political commitments by the political parties and candidates
- ☐ To meet with political parties and amend the unequal and unfair laws
- ☐ To gather advice and agreements after having meeting with the political parties more often
- ☐ Not to put restrictions and controls on election monitors
- ☐ To provide information and voting procedures in advance and when doing so, to provide to the people in every sector
- ☐ To pay close attention and craft carefully for accurate and precise voter lists
- ☐ To consider the geographical situation and road access issues, not just the voter list population when the UEC installs polling stations in rural areas
- ☐ To provide information for the PWDs specifically
- ☐ To permit PWDS with advanced voting opportunities and to provide model polling stations
- ☐ UEC should decide not to hold elections in unsafe area, and not to mark the areas controlled by EAOs as no-election areas
- ☐ To meet with the ethnic armed organizations and to lay down precise policy and guidelines , for the local people in the areas controlled by EAOs.

- ☐ To collaborate with EAOs and CSOs to provide, in local languages, voter education, widely in rural areas

State Election Sub-Commissions and State Governments

- ☐ To acknowledge and fully implement support for eligible voters to access citizenship documents
- ☐ To cooperate with eligible voters who want to participate in the election
- ☐ To carefully collect data on people with disabilities ensure their right to vote is guaranteed
- ☐ To provide as necessary for PWDs and people living in rural communities to be able to vote effortlessly
- ☐ To meet with EAOs and clarify precise policy and guidelines for voting people residing in areas controlled by EAOs
- ☐ To take particular consideration for people without ID cards but living in EAO-controlled areas and for the people, even holding ID cards, but who have fled their home villages to participate in the election
- ☐ To provide election related information openly

Political Parties

- ☐ To meet with local voters more often and explain about the party's platform and policy
- ☐ To fulfill its election promises
- ☐ To help distribute election-related information to communities
- ☐ To help voters become registered on the voter list and vote, and to provide trainings on voting procedures
- ☐ To help provide people with disabilities with better and easier access for them to be able to vote

Civil Society Organizations and the Public

- ☐ To cooperate in election events after founding election watchdogs/observer groups
- ☐ To distribute elections information widely
- ☐ To pay attention and provide election training to rural communities and people living in areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations
- ☐ To provide targeted voter education to people with disabilities

- ☐ To advocate for first-time youth voters to develop more interest in the election and to provide voter education and awareness trainings
- ☐ To help provide means for eligible voters to go vote
- ☐ To urge the respective Hluttaws, Union Government, Union Election Commission, and Election Sub-Commissions

Map of Research Locations





Appendices

Questionnaire form for field research

၁) ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ သတင်းအချက်အလက် ရရှိမှု

- ဗီဒီယိုစကားများ ကပ်ထားမှု ☐
- အသံချဲ့စက်ဖြင့် လိုက်လံနှိုးဆော်ခြင်း ☐
- အင်တာနက် ရရှိသလား/ အသုံးပြုနိုင်သလား ☐
- social media/ state media/ private media လက်လှမ်းမီသလား ☐
- UEC Facebook page/ website ကို သိသလား။ ဝင်ရောက်ကြည့်ရှုသလား။ ☐
- ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဆိုင်ရာ သတင်းမှား (ပါတီ/ကိုယ်စားလှယ် အပုပ်ချ/သတင်းမှား၊ လုံခြုံရေးသတင်း) ☐

၂) ရွေးကောက်ပွဲပညာပေးမှုအခြေအနေ

- သင်တန်းတက်ဖူးပါသလား ☐
- သင်တန်းပေးသည့်အဖွဲ့အစည်းတွေကို သိသလား ☐

၃) ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်း/နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီ သိရှိမှု

- ပါတီဘယ်နှခု ယှဉ်ပြိုင် ☐
- ကိုယ်စားလှယ်နာမည် ☐
- ပါတီ/ကိုယ်စားလှယ်အကြောင်း လက်ကမ်းစာစောင်/ဗီဒီယိုစကား ☐
- ပါတီများလာသလား/နည်းလာသလား ☐
- ပါတီများလာတာ ကောင်းသား/ဆိုးသလား ☐

၄) မဲစာရင်း

- မှတ်ပုံတင်/အိမ်ထောင်စု ရှိသလား ☐
- မဲစာရင်းကြည့်သလား ☐
- ပါသလား/မှားယွင်းမှုရှိသလား ☐
- ပြင်ဆင်ဖို့ လျှောက်ထားဖူးလား/ လွယ်ကူသလား ☐
- ပြည်ပရောက်မဲဆန္ဒရှင်စာရင်း (ပြည်တွင်းမဲစာရင်းပါဝင်ပြီးမှ ပုံစံ (၁၅) လျှောက်ထားနိုင်) ☐

၅) မဲရုံအခြေအနေ

- နီး/ဝေး ☐
- လမ်းပန်းဆက်သွယ်ရေး ☐
- လွတ်လပ်လုံခြုံစွာ မဲပေးနိုင်သလား ☐

၆) မဲပေးပုံနည်းနစ်

- သိရှိသလား ☐
- လွှတ်တော် သုံးရပ် + ၁ ☐



Appendices

အစီရင်ခံစာအတွက် မေးခွန်းများ

၇) ခြိမ်းခြောက်မှု၊ တားမြစ်မှု၊ မဲဝယ်ယူမှု

- ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်းများကို ခြိမ်းခြောက်ခြင်း ☐
- ပါတီဆိုင်ဘုတ် ပိုစတာများ ဖျက်ဆီးခြင်း ☐
- နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီတစ်ခုခုက အိမ်ထောင်စုအားလုံးကို တစ်ခုခုထောက်ပံ့တာမျိုး ရှိလား ☐

၈) ကိုဗစ်ကပ်ရောဂါ

- မဲပေးရင် ရောဂါကူးမှာ ကြောက်သလား ☐
- မဲဆွယ်စည်းရုံး (ကိုယ်စားလှယ်/ပါတီ) ☐
- ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင် - (ဘယ်လိုစီစဉ်) ☐

၉) ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဥပဒေများ

- နည်းဥပဒေ (၁၀) ☐
- အစိုးရအဖွဲ့ဝင် ကြိုတင်အခွင့်အရေးရနေ ☐
- လူမျိုးကို အခြေခံပြီး မဲဆွယ်ခြင်း မပြုရဟူသည့် မဲဆွယ်ဥပဒေအပေါ် အမြင် ☐
- နိုင်ငံတကာဥပဒေ - နိုင်ငံရေးနှင့် နိုင်ငံသားအခွင့်အရေး (ဆရာအောင်မျိုးမင်းကို ဗျူးရန်) ☐
- လေ့လာစောင့်ကြည့်ရေးအဖွဲ့များအပေါ် ကန့်သတ်မှု (နိုင်အဲမွန်) ☐

အခြား

အခြားနည်းဖြင့် သန့်စွမ်းသူများ

- ရွေးကောက်ပွဲသတင်း ဘယ်လိုရသလဲ၊ ကူညီပေးမည့်သူ ရှိလား ☐
- ရွေးကောက်ပွဲပညာပေး၊ မဲပေးခြင်းသင်တန်း ☐

ပထမဆုံးမဲပေးမည့် လူငယ်များ

- မဲပေးမှာလား ☐
- မဲစာရင်းပါလား ☐
- ရွေးကောက်ပွဲအပေါ် ယုံကြည်သလား ☐

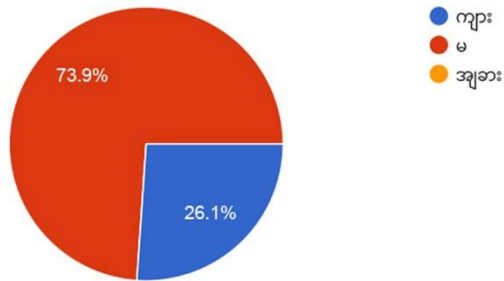


Appendices

မွန်ပြည်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း၏ စစ်တမ်းပြုစုသည့်အဖွဲ့ဝင်များမှ မြို့နယ် (၆) မြို့နယ်၊ ကျေးရွာ (၃၀) ရှိ ဒေသခံပြည်သူ (၁၂၉) ဦးတို့နှင့် တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခဲ့သည့် အချက်အလက်များအပေါ်တွင် အခြေခံသည်။

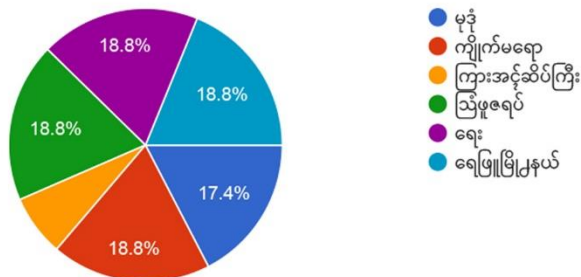
လိင်

69 responses



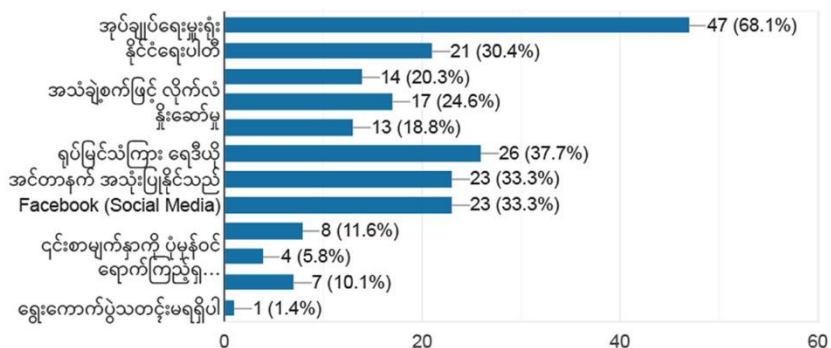
မြို့နယ်

69 responses



ရွေးကောက်ပွဲသတင်း ရရှိမှု

69 responses

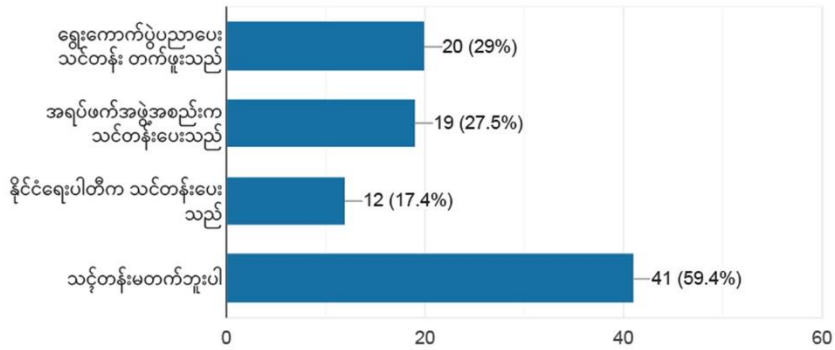




Appendices

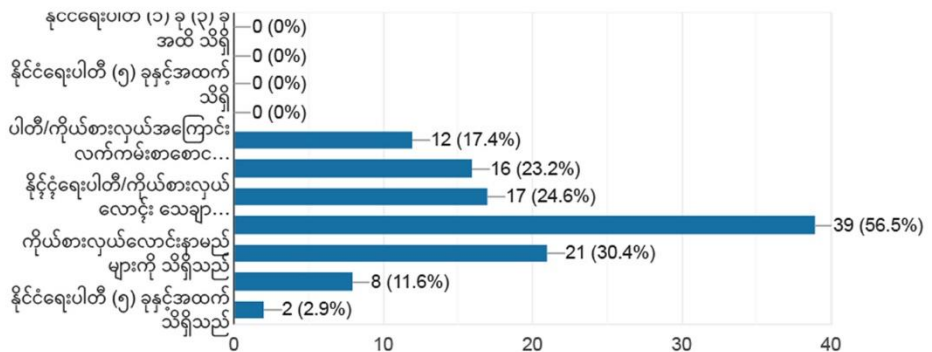
ရွေးကောက်ပွဲပညာပေးမှုအခြေအနေ

69 responses



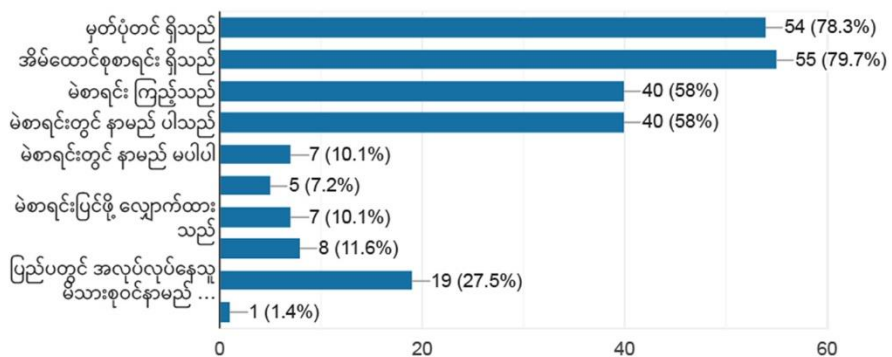
နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီ/ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်း သိရှိမှုအခြေအနေ

69 responses



မဲစာရင်း

69 responses

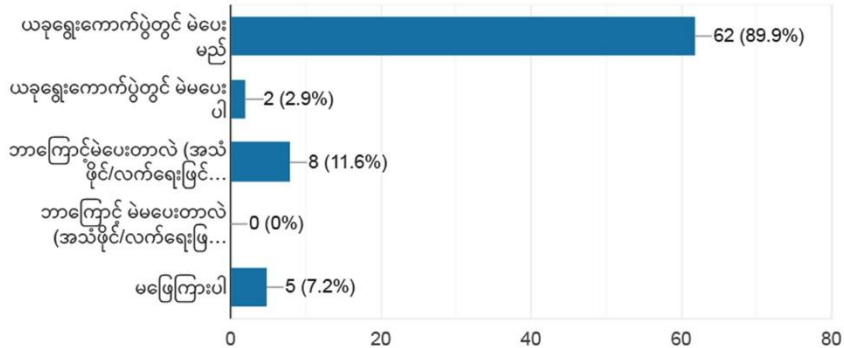




Appendices

မဲပေးခြင်း

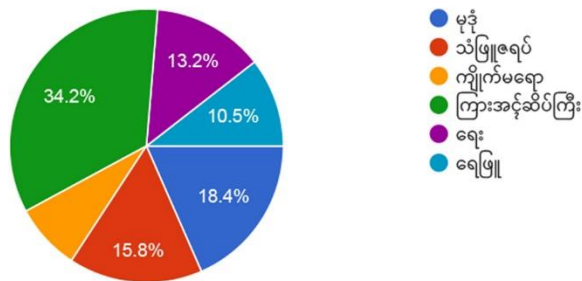
69 responses



ပထမဆုံးအကြိမ် မဲပေးမည့်လူငယ်များ၏ စစ်တမ်းအချက်အလက်များ

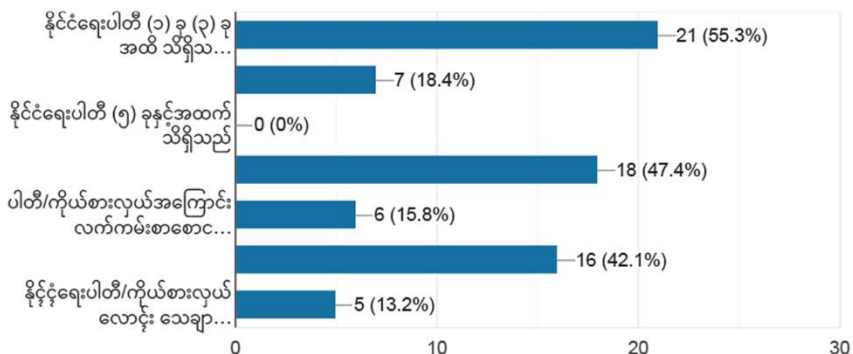
မြို့နယ်

38 responses



နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီ/ကိုယ်စားလှယ်လောင်း သိရှိမှု အခြေအနေ

38 responses

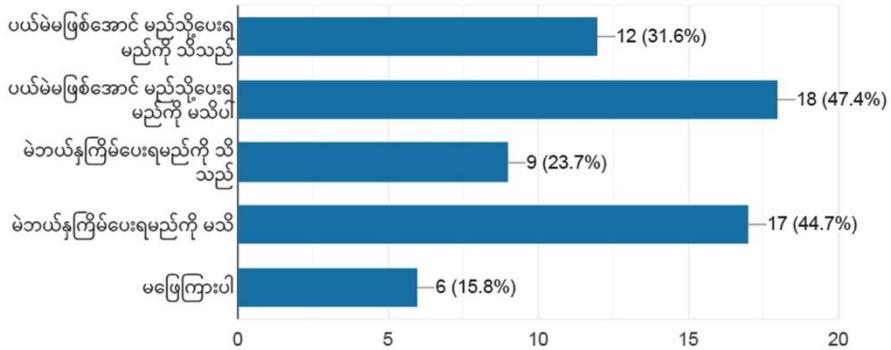




Appendices

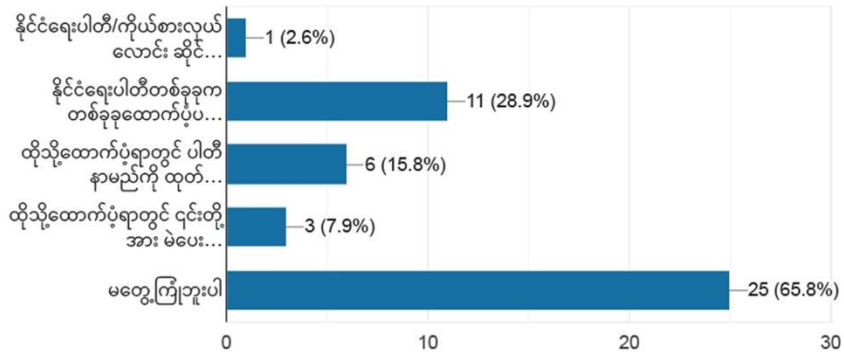
မဲပေးပုံနည်းစနစ်

38 responses



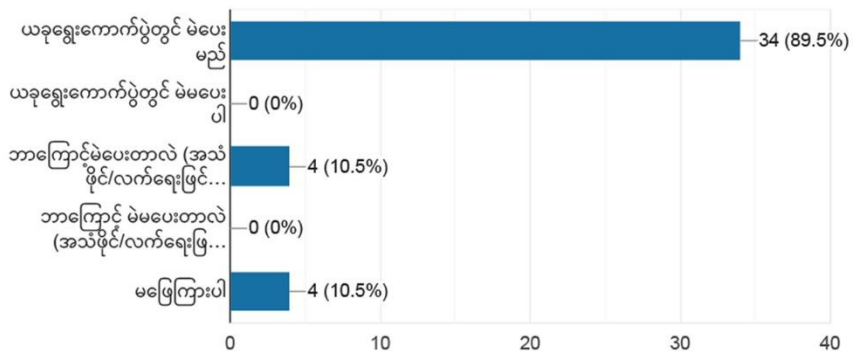
ခြိမ်းခြောက်မှု၊ တားမြစ်မှု၊ မဲဝယ်မှု

38 responses



မဲပေးခြင်း

38 responses





Inclusivity:

**Free and Fair Elections
Needed in Southeast Myanmar**

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OCTOBER 2020