

IMPACT STORY: DAW KHIN HTAR YEE, MEMBER OF THE SHAN STATE HLUTTAW, MYANMAR

Parliamentary Centre;

Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation;

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Impact Story:

Daw Khin Htar Yee

Member, Shan State Hluttaw

Daw Nan Khin Htar Yee never intended to be a politician, but her desire to support her uncle, drew her into the world of Myanmar politics. Following the end of the military dictatorship in 2010, Daw Htar Yee worked alongside her uncle who registered as a candidate for the Kyar Pyu Party in the Theinni Constituency located in northern Shan State. At a time when the rights for ethnic parties were still limited, Daw Htar Yee was involved in the risky activity of recruiting members in a constituency with strong military presence.

Today, Daw Htar Yee is herself an elected member representing the people of Theinni in the



Figure 1- Daw Khin Htar Yee presenting the groups research briefing

Shan State Hluttaw. She is part of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, the party with the second highest number of seats. Daw Htar Yee is one of only eight female MPs in the Hluttaw: a mere 5.8% of the 137 parliamentarians.

Performing the role of an elected member requires access to unbiased information and analysis on various issues. While this is a challenge for all parliamentarians in Myanmar, at

both the national and regional level, the difficulties are particularly pronounced for sub-national legislature members from remote constituencies like Daw Htar Yee. Until recently she had not received any formal training on parliamentary research, nor had she been able to obtain relevant help from the Hluttaw administration. When asked whether she reaches out to the Hluttaw's Library, Archive and Research Department Hluttaw for assistance, her response was the distance between the Hluttaw and her constituency is too big.

In September 2017, Daw Htar Yee was one of a group of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff that took part in a practical training on parliamentary research facilitated by the Parliamentary Centre and the Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation with the participation of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This was her first exposure to legislative research methodology, including essentials skills like looking for information online.

Shortly after the training, she did not hesitate to put her newly acquired skills to conduct research on her own. In the fall of 2017, the Shan State Hluttaw focused its attention on an important by-law that would determine the roles and functions of Shan State Municipal Development Committees and the way they are elected. The rough equivalent of municipal councils in Canada, these committees have an important role to play in local governance. Recognizing the importance of having a well-informed position, Daw Htar Yee took the initiative to conduct a comparative study of how similar issues are handled in other parts of Myanmar.



Figure 2 - Dar Khin Htar Yee (Left) working with her peers

In early summer 2018 she also inform the project team that she was further developing her research skills, gained under the project, at the Emerging Women’s Leadership Training in Chaingmai, Thailand. In this training, she has been undertaking research, on issues of interest to her and her constituents, in order to prepare a research brief that was presented to the other training participants. According to Daw Khin Htar Yee, “I can handle and find all relevant information without any help because I have learned all the skills and knowledge from the trainings provided by the Parliamentary Centre in partnership with EMReF” and “I am applying the knowledge and the skill I learned not only in questioning and proposing at the Hluttaw but also in implementing practical activities.”