

Train-the-Trainer Program Fosters Women’s Leadership Development in Myanmar

CASE STUDY



CHALLENGE

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is a multilingual country representing more than 100 ethnic groups, and where women are profoundly under-represented in public life and government. A study performed by international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) revealed that Myanmar has a “long and institutionalized tradition of male leadership” where men are perceived as “natural leaders” and women as “natural followers.”

Women likely have internalized these long-held stereotypes, which can affect the self-assessment of their abilities and confidence in assuming leadership roles. Despite support for NGOs and foreign aid, funding for leadership-development training is limited.

However, Myanmar is emerging from an extended period of civil and political turmoil, with greater gender equality among its transformational goals. Increasing the number of women leaders – and amplifying their voices – increases the representation of women’s concerns. It also improves leadership and decision-making across categories, benefitting organizations, communities, women, families, and more broadly, Myanmar.

CLIENT: Gender Equality Network (GEN)

LOCATION: Myanmar

SIZE: Inclusive network of more than 100 civil society organizations and NGOs working to bring about gender equality in the country



SOLUTION

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) partnered with the Gender Equality Network (GEN) to develop a Women's Leadership Development Program in Myanmar. GEN is an interagency network of national and international organizations that creates and implements systems, structures, and practices that advance women's rights and gender equality.

Together, CCL and GEN formed a team of local facilitators with the goal to provide leadership-training workshops to a broad range of women across sectors and regions. The partnership resulted in an 8-day Train-the-Trainer Program in Myanmar for 16 women facilitators skilled in driving relevant, affordable, and sustainable local leadership training.

Facilitators with extensive networks and resources within the country were recruited by GEN from youth, community, and grassroots agencies located in marginalized Myanmar regions. During the program, facilitators learned new leadership-training strategies that they practiced before groups of local leaders, and received coaching, feedback, and follow-up support.

Facilitators received a curriculum and toolkit based on CCL's Women's Leadership and Empowerment model. The research-based model, which was adapted for developing communities, is structured around 5 core themes:

1. **Self-Clarity:** Women who have self-clarity clearly understand themselves and their values, and are better able to chart their life's course.
2. **Authenticity:** Having an authentic sense of self builds confidence and helps women step forward into leadership roles.
3. **Agency:** As leaders, women can make choices that are in their best interests, embrace more positive ways of living and working, and control their destiny.
4. **Connection:** Developing relationships and support systems fosters solidarity among women and empowers them to maintain their commitment to act as change agents.
5. **Mentoring:** Leaders share knowledge and support others to build a leadership community and positively influence the lives of generations to come.

The 5 themes were woven through more than 10 training modules that guided participants during workshops that began with participants examining their identity and concluded with creating an inspiring vision for the future.

The collective impact of the CCL and GEN collaboration paved the way for customized, localized training methodologies and workshops.

RESULTS

Within the first 4 months of the program, facilitators held nearly 30 workshops for more than 670 participants, including local NGO and community leaders across Myanmar. The success of the Women's Leadership Development Program demonstrates the progress that can be achieved when a diverse group of international and local entities work together towards a shared goal. It's also a prime example of how leadership development can unleash the talents and potential of women, and have a dramatic impact on an entire community.

Facilitators have used the CCL tools and training to enhance programs focusing on gender issues and violence against women, among other challenges. Also, The Women's Leadership and Empowerment toolkit has since been adapted for young participants and people with disabilities.

Additional positive outcomes by facilitators and program participants include:

- » Developing and negotiating new national policy and legislation.
- » Actively engaging in peace-building efforts when needed throughout the country.
- » Leading community groups and development in urban and rural areas.
- » Spearheading research and collaborative efforts in agriculture, healthcare, and education.

CCL continues to actively develop leadership-training opportunities for women of all ages worldwide, focusing on areas ranging from governments of new democracies and social justice to gender sensitization and sexual harassment.

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PROGRAM ALUMNA SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

CCL program alumna and Gender Equality Network Director May Sabe Phyu was among 10 women chosen to receive the annual International Women of Courage Award from the United States Department of State. The award honors Phyu for her contribution to the Train-the-Trainer Program and advocacy for the rights of women, and ethnic and religious minorities in Myanmar.

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