

**YANGON UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS
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**A STUDY ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL ECONOMY
AT NGAPUDAW TOWNSHIP, AYEYARWADY REGION**

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EMDevS - 31 (18th BATCH)**

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A STUDY ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL ECONOMY
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of
Development Studies (MDevS) Degree

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“A Study on Women’s Participation in Rural Economy at Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region”** Submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Executive Master of Economics has been accepted by the Board of Examiners.

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the women's participation in the rural economy of Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region. The study aims to identify women's participation in economic activities, social activities, and environmental conservation in rural areas of Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar. The study found that all women are actively involved in economic initiatives with agriculture, small businesses, or local services. Most women participate in social activities, however, 6.6% of women could not participate in social activities with education and health care due to time constraints and limited awareness. The study indicates that despite most of the women are environmentally conscious, some are lack of such involvement. It indicates that they need initiatives such as waste management strategies and public education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
CD	Community Development
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Myanmar's Central Statistical Organization
DRD	Department of Rural Development
DAQS	Data Accuracy and Quality of Statistics
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FJC	The Justice Collective
GAD	General Administration Department
KII	Key Informant Interview
HHs	Households
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOHS	Ministry of Health and Sports
MOPF	Ministry of Planning and Finance
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NSOs	National Statistical Offices
OED	The Oxford English Dictionary
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRG	Self-Reliance Group
WDF	The Women's Development Foundation
WEG	Women Entrepreneur Group
WFP	World Food Programme
WID	The Women in Development
WIG	Women Income Group
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCAP	The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Small-scale business activities, agricultural production, and various informal income-generating jobs are all actively involved by women in rural Myanmar. Women have little access to resources, credit, and chances for economic growth, and women's contributions to the economy are frequently disregarded. This study aims to investigate the economic, social contributions of women and environmental conservation to local. Rural women's economic endeavors have a direct impact on household income and the reduction of poverty. Knowing women's economic roles and the difficulties women encounter is crucial to creating plans that promote sustainable lives. In places like Ngapudaw Township, where agricultural output and community ingenuity are directly linked to economic resilience, this is especially important.

Women are essential to building social networks and community cohesion in Ngapudaw Township, as women are in many rural areas. Women improve local government and contribute to the development of social capital through women's involvement in volunteer work, social groups, and community decision-making. Analyzing the roles provides insights into how women enhance social capital and networks of support, contributing to community well-being in ways that go beyond women's economic contribution. A key step toward greater gender equality may be women's social participation. The research looks at how much women participate in communal activities, what obstacles stand in women's way, and how cultural norms affect gender roles. These results can guide efforts to increase women's visibility in public life, leadership, and decision-making authority.

In rural Myanmar, women frequently manage essential natural resources that sustain women's homes and communities, like firewood, water, and local crops. Women's contributions to conservation initiatives are essential to preserving ecological balance, particularly in places like the Ayeyarwady Region where

community livelihoods are directly impacted by resource availability and environmental health. The study intends to highlight the importance of women's knowledge and actions in environmental conservation. Myanmar's rural areas are especially susceptible to the effects of climate change and environmental deterioration. Women can play a significant role in climate adaptation initiatives since women are typically in charge of obtaining and overseeing resources. The environmental conservation focus of this study emphasizes how giving women access to information, resources, and decision-making authority might increase rural communities' ability to withstand the effects of climate change.

The rationale for this study is grounded in the need to acknowledge and understand the multi-faceted roles of rural women in Ngapudaw Township. By investigating women's economic, social, and environmental contributions, this research seeks to provide a holistic view of how women contribute to and sustain women's communities. The study also aims to address advocating for more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development practices that recognize women's critical role in rural Myanmar.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to identify women's participation in economic activities, social activities, and environmental conservation in rural areas.

1.3 Method of Study

In Ngapudaw Township, 121 women from six villages of four village tracts provided quantitative and qualitative data for the study. Descriptive analysis was performed in this study using the primary data. Using the basic random sampling method, primary data were gathered in June – July 2024. Publications, reports, websites, the internet, Statistical Year Books, the Township Profile Census of Ngapudaw, the Health and Sports Department of Ngapudaw township, and earlier research were secondary data sources.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The 121 women who participated in this study were from six villages of four Village Tracts in Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar. A random

sampling method was used to select participants from these villages and tracts. The villages were chosen to capture a diverse representation of socio-economic backgrounds and engagement levels in community development activities within the region. This sample provides a comprehensive overview of rural women's participation in economic, social, and environmental activities across various village settings within the Ayeyarwady Region. The period of the survey was from June 2024 to July 2024.

1.5 Organization of the Study

For this study, there are five chapters. Organization of the study's introduction, objectives, methodology, scope, and limitations is done in Chapter I. The literature review is found in Chapter II. Chapter III states an overview of rural women's participation in economic, social, and environmental conservation in the Ayeyarwady Region. Chapter IV examines the survey analysis, and Chapter V is the conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Women's Participation

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defined the English term "Participation" in 1973 that refers to "the fact or condition of sharing in common (with others, or with each other); partnership, fellowship; profit-sharing" (OED, 1973, p. 15, 18). There are many different definitions of participation. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined the involvement of individuals and groups in decision-making processes and activities that affect women's lives (UNESCO, 2005). World Bank defined that through the process of participation, stakeholders can share and exert influence over development projects, as well as the decisions and resources that impact women (World Bank, 2018). According to Karl (1995), there are often two aspects to participation: quantitative and qualitative. The term "quantitative" describes the numerical component of involvement. It emphasizes the number of people or groups participating in a specific activity or procedure. Qualitative research focuses on the type and extent of people's involvement in procedures and activities, emphasizing the quality of participation. In the mid-1970s, involvement in rural activities became formally recognized. Early in the 1970s, it was realized that women made substantial contributions to home administration and agricultural productivity, but frequently without recognition or assistance. This marked the beginning of the focus on women's roles in rural development. In the 1970s, development initiatives mostly concentrated on male-dominated facets of rural life, like large-scale agricultural output, leaving rural women's contributions largely ignored.

According to Robert Chambers (2005), development processes and initiatives exhibit four levels of engagement.

1. Information: People educate others about the service through newsletters, webpages, project introductions, and brochures.

2. Consultation: People use polls, surveys, message boards, interviews, and suggestion boxes to share knowledge, educate others, and get feedback about the service.
3. Decision-making: People participate in decision-making, share information, get input on the service, and inform others.
4. Empowerment: People give information, educate others, and get input regarding the service; citizens make decisions and carry women out.

There are numerous obstacles to involvement in a variety of contexts, including institutional, sociocultural, and technical ones. Robert Chambers highlights some challenges to participating in the development process like power imbalances, lack of trust, social and cultural barriers, limited resources, and inadequate facilitation. In 1997, Robert Chambers identified "participation" is utilized in development contexts in three main ways:

1. Cosmetic Labeling: Participation is frequently employed cosmetically to satisfy donor requirements, gives the impression that a project is grassroots, and makes it seem inclusive and community-driven, even while the local populace is not involved.
2. Co-opting Labor: Participation is bringing community members into a project to cut expenses, but it lacks empowerment because women have little control over the goals and strategies of the project.
3. Empowering: Involving people in planning, decision-making, and execution, appreciating women's expertise, and encouraging a sense of ownership over the project are all ways that participation strengthens communities.

Women are particularly disadvantaged in a patriarchal and impoverished society. As a result, various methods for encouraging women to participate have been presented. Women in Development (WID) was introduced in the 1970s. The 1970 release of Ester Boserup's book "Women's Role in Economic Development" was revolutionary since it highlighted the contribution of women to economic growth and chastised development models for ignoring women. The WID strategy, which prioritizes women's participation in development projects, was sparked by Boserup's work. In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which requires nations to

support equal participation of women in all spheres of life, including rural development. In 2000, countries were encouraged to give women's empowerment, especially that of rural women, the top priority in women's development agendas by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which established specific targets for gender equality, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. The UN prioritized gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls when it adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), paying particular attention to the responsibilities that rural women play in the economy, society, and environment. 2015's Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and 5 (Gender Equality) both emphasize how crucial it is to empower rural women.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) outlined in 2009 reports that women's human rights must be upheld to empower women through greater access to resources, education, technology, and governance structures. Supporting women in technology, lowering the load of household chores, and guaranteeing equitable economic participation are important issues.

2.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Rural Women

The age distribution, marital status, and household arrangements of rural women are frequently different from those of women's urban counterparts. Many belong to larger families, which may have an impact on women's socioeconomic obligations and civic tasks. The proportion of younger people in rural populations is typically larger. However, a sizable portion of elderly women may be included in the demographic profile, especially in agricultural towns, as young people frequently leave rural areas in search of better opportunities in urban areas. This may have an impact on the labor market and the assistance provided to elderly family members. Rural women are frequently more likely than women's urban counterparts to get married young. Early marriage may affect women's access to education and economic engagement. Certain areas may also see polygamous marriages as a result of cultural customs, which can make domestic relationships and financial obligations more difficult. Many rural women are part of extended, larger families. Sharing economic obligations can result from this home arrangement, but it may also put more pressure on women to balance women's duties as producers and mothers. In addition to offering chances for assistance, having several generations living in the same home

might provide difficulties when it comes to allocating resources and providing care. For rural women, access to education continues to be a major obstacle. Rural women, especially in poor nations, suffer major obstacles to education due to cultural norms, financial limitations, and geographic restrictions, according to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, 2015. The World Development Report (2012), which addressed gender equality and development, found that rural and urban women have different educational attainment and that rural women face structural obstacles to schooling. The studies indicate that rural women frequently have lower educational attainment and literacy rates than urban women and men. Women's capacity to fully engage in communal decision-making and women's employment prospects are restricted by this discrepancy.

2.3 Women's Roles and Contributions in Rural Activities

Rural women are essential to women's communities, making major contributions to social cohesion, family welfare, economic development, and environmental sustainability. Women frequently play a variety of duties, including caring for the home, working in agriculture, participating in the community, and preserving culture. Planting, harvesting, and post-harvest processing are among the farming activities that rural women perform, making up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce. Maintaining household food security and supporting local food markets depend heavily on the contributions of women. A large number of rural women work in occupations that provide revenue, like animal husbandry, small-scale trading, and handicrafts. Women contribute more money to the household through these endeavors, and women frequently use the money women make to improve the overall welfare, health, and education of women's families. Rural women are involved in local markets, where women sell processed foods, handcrafted crafts, and agricultural produce.

Women's involvement in local commerce is essential to the rural economy and promotes economic stability in the community. The majority of unpaid household work, including cooking, cleaning, childcare, and elder care, is frequently performed by rural women. Maintaining the operation of the home and promoting the welfare of the family depends heavily on the duties played by women. Women are frequently in charge of overseeing household resources in rural areas, such as gathering firewood, collecting water, and storing food. Numerous rural women oversee savings, informal loans, and household budgets. Women's financial management abilities such as

meeting everyday necessities, investing for future needs, and reducing financial risks, are essential.

2.4 Women's Participation in Rural Economy

Women maintain long-term agricultural production and environmental health depending on sustainable farming methods including crop rotation, composting, and organic farming. Women are in charge of gathering water and helping with conservation initiatives in many villages. Women frequently take part in practices that preserve natural resources and advance environmental sustainability, such as planting trees, reforestation, and soil conservation. Rural women frequently take the lead in public health-improving projects including nutrition plans, health education campaigns, and sanitation initiatives. Women play a critical role in lowering avoidable disease rates and encouraging healthy lifestyles in women's communities. Rural women are traditional health workers for the health of mothers and children. Rural women are essential to the health of children, and family's health.

Rural women are essential to maintaining regional traditions, customs, and cultural heritage. Rural women uphold norms such as dressing traditionally in Myanmar, honoring elders, and adhering to community traditions. Women participate actively in local government, cooperatives, and community organizations, where women hold leadership positions in welfare and communal initiatives. Rural women participate in village saving groups and microfinance activities. Rural women's roles and contributions are essential to community resilience, stability, and adaptability of women's communities. Women create a positive feedback loop that supports family peace, societal harmony, and environmental preservation by striking a balance between economic, social, and household responsibilities. The varied contributions of rural women are crucial to the long-term sustainability of rural development, despite challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and cultural differences.

2.5 Challenges of Women's Participation in Rural Activities

Women's involvement in rural activities is essential to attain sustainable development, but women encounter numerous obstacles that prevent women from taking part in social, economic, and environmental conservation initiatives. Despite playing a crucial role in resource management and agricultural output, rural women frequently face structural obstacles that restrict women's access to opportunities and

contributions. The restricted availability of financial resources, including loans, land, and training, is one of the main obstacles. According to studies, rural women often lack formal land rights, which limits women's capacity to independently and sustainably work in agriculture (FAO, 2011). Moreover, the lack of financial services that are suited to women's requirements may significantly restrict women's capacity to start women's own businesses and engage in local economies. Women's involvement in rural communities is greatly impacted by cultural norms and traditional gender roles. Women are frequently disproportionately expected to handle domestic and caregiving duties due to societal expectations, which might keep women from participating in economic or community development initiatives (UN Women, 2015). Furthermore, women's views are frequently silenced in governance institutions that impact women's communities and way of life due to women's underrepresentation in decision-making processes (World Bank, 2012). Although women are essential to environmental conservation, women frequently do not have access to the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively engage in these programs. Rural women are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental degradation, which exacerbates already-existing disparities and limits women's ability to adopt sustainable practices (UNESCAP, 2009). Women's contributions to resource management are frequently not sufficiently acknowledged, which discourages women's participation in conservation initiatives.

Rural women face some challenges in terms of economic participation. Rural women are responsible for unpaid domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning, and raising children, which leaves women with little time for activities that generate revenue. Rural women frequently balance several responsibilities as mothers, housewives, farmers, and community members, which can limit women's ability to engage in the economy. Some of the nature of jobs restrict women's participation like high-rise construction, long-distance trading activities, and jobs with using strength. Women in rural areas are limited in their ability to participate in higher-paying jobs as women lack basic literacy and numeracy skills due to the lack of access to education in rural and isolated areas. Encouraging sustainable development, social equality, and economic resilience in rural areas requires addressing the issues that rural women face. Women's ability to engage fully in social activities is frequently restricted by cultural norms and traditional gender roles. Women may be deterred from assuming leadership positions or participating in public life by societal perceptions (UNDP,

2016). Many women are overburdened with unpaid caregiving and household duties, which leaves women with little time and energy for social activities. This disparity may make it more difficult for women to take part in community projects. Women frequently encounter obstacles while trying to get resources including information, training, and education, which might hinder women's capacity to participate in society (ILO, 2020). When participating in public life, women may experience violence, harassment, or intimidation, which might discourage women from taking part in social and political activities (UN Women, 2021). Because of ingrained discrimination and gender norms, women frequently encounter structural obstacles to women's involvement in environmental decision-making processes. According to UN Women (2018), this may restrict women's access to opportunities, knowledge, and resources. Women may be less able to lead environmental efforts or participate in sustainable practices because women do not have access to technology, land, or financial resources (World Bank, 2016). Women may find it challenging to participate in environmental advocacy or activities due to traditional gender norms that limit women's mobility and public life engagement (FAO, 2011). Due to women's frequent underrepresentation in environmental governance systems, women's demands and viewpoints are not given enough weight in environmental policy (GEM, 2019).

2.6 Review on Previous Studies

As part of a literature review on, a study of rural women's participation in Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady region, the following studies were observed.

Pannilage, U. (2010) studied women's participation in rural development in Sri Lanka's Southern Province. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data, implying a mixed-method approach. Primary data involve direct insights from rural women's experiences in Sri Lanka, while secondary data may provide context from previous studies or reports on development interventions. The study found that gender-specific programs risk marginalizing men, while gender-neutral programs may primarily benefit dominant groups, potentially neglecting women's specific needs. The study found that rural women are highly involved in decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development interventions. The study suggests that previous approaches lacked sufficient impact on rural women's conditions, which can prompt further analysis of how these models might have overlooked structural issues like unequal access to resources or gender norms in

patriarchal societies. Evaluate if GAD effectively addresses these limitations or if it, too, falls short in certain aspects. The study's comparative approach to gender-specific and gender-neutral programs in Sri Lanka allows for an in-depth understanding of each model's strengths and limitations. Highlight how this comparison enhances the study's validity and if similar approaches might be applicable in other contexts, such as rural Myanmar.

Khin Win Maw (2014) studied on women's participation in post-Nargis NGO projects in selected villages of Bogalay Township, Myanmar, aimed to assess women's capabilities and progress. The study used primary and secondary data, descriptive analysis, and in-depth interviews with women groups. The study examined population growth, work types, and changes in women-headed households before and after Cyclone Nargis. The findings highlighted issues that need to be addressed to enhance gender equality and equity at the community level, particularly in allowing women to participate in village elders' groups and trustee members. The study suggests that addressing these issues is vital for promoting gender equity and fostering inclusive community development in Bogalay Township. The study highlights the critical role of women's participation in NGO projects following Cyclone Nargis, revealing both women's capabilities and the challenges women face in achieving gender equality. By assessing the demographic and socioeconomic changes in women-headed households, the study calls for enhanced support to facilitate women's involvement in decision-making processes at the community level, particularly within village governance structures.

L Ji Mai (2017) examined women's participation in the Kachin Literature and Culture Association of Lashio, Northern Shan State. The research found that women are often elected by nominating a team of men, but women emphasize the importance of women's decision-making roles and the 30% quota for women's participation in executive committees. However, women face obstacles such as childcare, fear, schedule constraints, and patriarchal tendencies. The study suggests that improving women's capacity, policy changes, and reducing barriers can increase women's confidence. The study also suggests raising legal awareness and management skills to empower women. It also suggests that women's participation can help eliminate domestic violence, divorce, and sexual and gender-based violence, as women sympathize with victims and facilitate open discussions. The study offers a comprehensive view of the interaction between gender quotas, capacity building, and

structural support in enhancing women's participation in leadership. It also reveals the potential for such participation to influence broader cultural and social issues, which could provide valuable insights for your research on rural women's roles in community development activities.

John Than Htun (2019) studied rural women's participation in community development activities in Shan State, Myanmar, aimed to explore women's experiences and challenges. The study examined villager women from different socio-economic backgrounds and identified language barriers, familiar burdens, low education levels, social issues from resettlement, and poverty as major barriers for women to participate in these activities. The findings were analyzed using primary and secondary data from two villages in the Pekhon Township Area. The study sheds light on the critical barriers faced by rural women in Shan State regarding community development participation. It highlights the need for targeted strategies to address these challenges, enhance women's empowerment, and foster women's involvement in community initiatives. The findings suggest that understanding and addressing the socio-cultural, educational, and economic barriers are essential for improving rural women's participation in development activities. Analysis of this study highlights the significant, intersecting barriers rural women face in development participation, contributing valuable insights into how social, economic, and cultural factors shape women's engagement.

Majokweni, Zipo-Zihle Pilela (2019) study aimed to explore the role of women's community groups as interventions for empowerment and advancing socio-economic wellbeing in rural South Africa. The study used qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups to investigate the role and impact of women's community groups. The study used qualitative interviews with women's group members, stakeholder interviews with development institutions, case study analysis of successful women's groups, a survey for quantitative analysis, a literature review, and document analysis to identify mechanisms for development institutions to improve and sustain these groups. The findings revealed that female participants prefer groups with more women due to the patriarchal culture in rural communities. The ease of communication in groups with a majority of women eliminates communication barriers, but cultural limitations prevent women from

expressing themselves. Participants shared experiences of abuse, patriarchy, and the ease of communication, but felt men would overpower women. The study illustrates the critical role of rural women in supporting women's families and communities, as well as the importance of empowering women through community groups. The study shows that the groups not only enhance women's capabilities but also contribute significantly to socio-economic well-being and sustainable development. The findings indicate a need for continued support and research to maximize the impact of these groups, ultimately fostering more effective interventions in rural development.

Ko Ko Hlaing (2022) study aimed to identify environmental issues in Hmawbi Township, Yangon Region and examine the environmental awareness and practices of urban residents. Both primary and secondary data were used, with participants questioned about efforts to improve canal water flow. A survey of 300 households focused on environmental knowledge and practices, with most women being educated women aged 25-34. The study found that Environmental Problems include environmental degradation and pollution, Climate change impacts, Noise pollution from traffic and neighbors, Congestion and overcrowding, Shortages of basic amenities, and Health problems linked to environmental conditions. The study notes that urban environmental problems are often the result of harmful human activities impacting the biophysical environment. The study recommends Government Action that the government establish effective environmental management strategies in both urban and rural areas, there is a need to disseminate environmental knowledge and raise awareness among the population, and implementing incentive programs, such as awards based on performance, could encourage community participation and enhance environmental practices. The findings from the study underscore the pressing environmental issues faced by Hmawbi Township and highlight the need for enhanced environmental knowledge and practices among its residents. The recommendations for government action suggest a pathway towards better environmental management, which could significantly improve the quality of life in the urban area. This structured analysis reveals the importance of combining education, regulatory action, and community involvement to tackle environmental issues in urban Myanmar,

particularly in rapidly growing regions like Hmawbi Township. The study contributes valuable insights into environmental management and the role of community awareness and engagement in achieving sustainability goals.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AYEYARWADY REGION

3.1 Overview of Ayeyarwady Region

The Ayeyarwady Region in Myanmar is the country's primary crop-producing region, with Patheingyi as its capital city. The Rakhine region borders this region to the northwest, the Bago region to the north and east, the Yangon region to the east, and the Bay of Bengal to the south and west. The Ayeyarwady region is the coastal area between the Bay of Bengal to the west and the Andaman Sea to the south. The region lies roughly between latitudes 15° 40' and 18° 30' north and longitudes 94° 15' and 96° 15' east. The Ayeyarwady River's delta, commonly referred to as the Irrawaddy River, is home to the Ayeyarwady Region. Ayeyarwady has a total population of 6.271 million, including males (3.039 million) and females (3.232 million), making it the most populated region in Myanmar. 15.34% (962 Nos) of people in Ayeyarwady Region live in urban areas, while 84.66% (5309 Nos) live in rural areas. Therefore, it is the region with the highest proportion of people living in rural areas. Among those living in rural areas, the number of women is higher than the number of men in the Ayeyarwady region. According to the population growth statistics for the Ayeyarwady Region from 2013 to 2021, the number of women is higher than the number of men every year. The total population has not seen significant changes in this region from 2013 to 2021, see Table (3.1). Ayeyarwady Region has eight districts: Kyaukse, Patheingyi, Hinthada, Labutta, Maubin, Myanaung, Pyawbwe, and Myingyan. This region contains 11860 villages, 302 wards, 1920 village groups, 45 cities, and 26 townships (Statistical Yearbook 2022).

Table (3.1) Distribution of Population in Ayeyarwady Region

Year	Male (Thousand Value)	Female (Thousand Value)	Total (Thousand Value)
2013	3000	3150	6150
2014	3010	3175	6185
2015	3010	3175	6185
2016	3010	3175	6185
2017	3010	3175	6185
2018	3044	3228	6272
2019	3044	3229	6273
2020	3040	3232	6272
2021	3039	3232	6271

Source: Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2015-2022

3.2 Women's Participation in Economic, Social, and Environmental Activities in Ayeyarwady Region

Women living in the rural areas of the Ayeyarwady Region are involved in agriculture, home gardening, fishing, salt production, paste and dried fish businesses, small self-owned businesses, and random activities to earn family income. For rural women, the Ayeyarwady Region of Myanmar offers special opportunities and challenges because of its abundant natural resources and substantial agricultural activity. In this area, women are essential to social, economic, and environmental preservation initiatives. Women's participation is essential to attaining gender equality and advancing sustainable development.

In agriculture, women play a significant role in planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing in the Ayeyarwady Region. Although women are frequently underpaid or unpaid, women's labor is crucial to the production of rice, pulses, and other crops. Women also take part in caring for livestock, especially in small-scale pig, duck, and poultry farms. Women are heavily involved in almost every stage of rice farming because the Ayeyarwady region is Myanmar's main rice-producing region. Land preparation, seedling transplantation, and post-harvest operations including threshing, drying, and milling are all included. In family farms,

women's labor is frequently unpaid, although women's efforts are essential to meeting the enormous demand for rice. The Ayeyarwady Region's women make a substantial contribution to the agricultural industry, especially in labor-intensive jobs, according to the Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2022. Although public sources do not provide precise numbers of women's participation in the Ayeyarwady Region, data at the national level shows that women play a significant role in planting, weeding, and harvesting throughout Myanmar's agricultural industry. Women also make up a sizable share of the workforce in smaller-scale agricultural industries including duck and chicken farming as well as in the care of cattle.

Women are vital to the fishing and aquaculture industries, especially in the Ayeyarwady Region's small-scale fishing households. Post-harvest activities, such as drying fish, peeling shrimp, cleaning, sorting, and packaging, are actively carried out by rural women. Additionally, women play a crucial role in the local markets where women sell these fish and seafood items, supporting family incomes and improving food security. In these areas, women labor on a variety of fisheries products, including fermented fish paste and dried fish, which are both staples in the local cuisine and provide reliable sources of income. Although women's services may not always be officially acknowledged, women frequently have to handle the additional duties of managing the financial aspects of fish sales as well as transporting goods to local or regional markets. In addition to increasing the income of women's households, women's participation in these activities promotes regional food supply networks and enhances the economic resilience of fishing communities.

Rural women in the Ayeyarwady Region are heavily involved in handicrafts and cottage enterprises, which offer crucial extra revenue in addition to women's main agricultural duties. Women are able to reconcile economic contributions with domestic responsibilities thanks to these home-based activities. The region's most popular handicrafts, which support local economies and represent cultural history, are ceramics, bamboo craftsmanship, and traditional weaving. Textiles made by women, like traditional clothing, are frequently offered for sale at neighborhood markets or through cooperatives. Intricate designs and fine craftsmanship are frequently used in the work, enabling craftspeople to produce one-of-a-kind goods with cultural value. Women who weave can manage women's home responsibilities and earn money, giving women a measure of financial freedom. Using readily available materials like bamboo and rattan, women in the Ayeyarwady Region make baskets, mats, and

household goods. These crafts, which combine ecological techniques with ancient abilities, are frequently handed down through the generations. Local and occasionally regional demand exists for bamboo products, but limited market access may limit potential revenue.

Many rural women in the Ayeyarwady Region are vital to local market and trade activities, contributing considerably to household incomes and local economies. Women are involved in a wide range of products, such as small goods, fish, fresh produce, and handicrafts. Women frequently sell agricultural goods and seafood that women's families have caught or raised at local marketplaces. Women's participation increases women's economic independence in addition to giving women's households the necessary revenue. Even if women actively participate, women nevertheless face many obstacles that may hinder women's success in local commerce. One major obstacle is women's restricted access to transportation, which makes it challenging for women to effectively transport goods or reach larger markets.

Rural women in the Ayeyarwady Region contribute significantly to household and communal development in addition to women's economic efforts. Women improve local welfare and foster stronger community ties through women's involvement in health, education, social support, and cultural preservation. Women have a crucial role as leaders in health awareness campaigns in the Ayeyarwady Region's rural communities, particularly in places with little access to official healthcare infrastructure. In order to increase accessibility and impact, these programs usually work with regional healthcare practitioners or non-governmental organizations. Women also commonly address important health practices, such as illness prevention, sanitation, and hygiene. By teaching women's communities' fundamental sanitation and hygiene skills, rural women help stop the spread of prevalent diseases. This includes behaviors that are particularly crucial in flood-prone places like Ayeyarwady, such as handwashing, appropriate waste disposal, and the use of clean water. In order to share information on diet, immunizations, and prenatal and postnatal care, women frequently plan group meetings centered on maternal and child health.

Rural women in the Ayeyarwady Region contribute significantly to household and communal development in addition to women's economic efforts. Involving women in health, education, social support, and cultural preservation improves local welfare and fortifies ties within the community. Campaigns for health awareness

frequently have rural women at the lead. Sometimes working with non-governmental groups or local healthcare providers, women teach women's communities about preventative care, hygiene, and health habits. Women are often involved in informal education, teaching children core skills such as basic literacy and numeracy. Women can also help local schools by serving on committees, planning events, and even collecting money for educational supplies.

Women have a crucial role in environmental conservation in the Ayeyarwady Region, especially when it comes to initiatives to combat climate change and save regional habitats. Women are involved in a number of projects, such as encouraging sustainable farming methods and reforesting mangroves. Women frequently participate in mangrove regeneration efforts since the Ayeyarwady Region is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including increasing sea levels and increased floods. Mangroves are essential for maintaining biodiversity, halting soil erosion, and protecting the seashore. Community initiatives to plant mangrove seedlings and spread knowledge of women's ecological significance are frequently spearheaded by women. Women help advance sustainable farming methods that preserve soil health, save water, and increase biodiversity. Women frequently engage in training programs focused on sustainable land management and embrace organic agricultural practices. In addition to increasing agricultural output, these methods support environmental equilibrium.

3.3 Overview of Ngapudaw Township

Ngapudaw Township is located in the southern tip of Myanmar, the Ayeyarwady Region, it is a part of the Patheingyi district. There are 160,985 males and 160,046 females in Ngapudaw Township with a total population of 321,031. 144,416 males and 145,657 females, a total population of 290,073 live in the rural areas of Ngapudaw Township, and 16,569 males and 14,389 females, a total population of 30,958 live in the urban area as per Local Facts, GAD -2023 March Report of Ngapudaw Township. There are three towns in Ngapudaw Township: Ngapudaw, Ngayoke Kaung, and Hlaingyi Kyun. Ngapudaw Town is the principal town of Ngapudaw Township. The Ngapudaw Township has 9 Quarters, 83 Village Tracts, and 411 Villages (GAD, 2023). Ngapudaw Township, which is in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Region, is distinguished by its varied communities and agricultural scenery. Ngapudaw Township, which is well-known for its natural resources and fertile terrain,

is a crucial component of Myanmar's "rice bowl" and helps to ensure local food security and agricultural output in the area. Rice farming, aquaculture, and fishing are the main sources of income for the locals, and the terrain, which is crisscrossed by river systems and channels, makes these activities feasible.

Most people living in Ngapudaw Township are from rural areas, and women's communities mostly depend on fishing, small-scale trading, and subsistence farming. Despite playing a crucial part in these endeavors, rural women in Ngapudaw encounter obstacles that are common in rural Myanmar, including restricted access to financial, medical, and educational resources. In order to balance women's obligations to women's families with women's employment in agriculture, many women engage in extensive unpaid domestic and agricultural labor. In communities, women frequently play a significant role in generating revenue, ensuring food security, and fostering social cohesiveness. Women are vital to this township's agriculture, social life, and environmental preservation, among other areas. Women's involvement improves women's communities' general well-being and has a major influence on local development. This summary addresses the main facets of rural women's involvement in Ngapudaw Township, the obstacles women encounter, and the significance of giving women more authority in community development.

Table (3.2) Population of Ngapudaw Township

Year	Number of Male	Number of Female	Total Population
2014	84182	84594	168776
2017	84182	84594	168776
2019	163433	164644	328077
2023	160985	160046	321031

Sources: Tsp Profiles-2014 Census Ngapudaw Township Report

Ngapudaw Township is located in Patheingyi District, Ayeyarwady Region, and is a township that focuses on agriculture, fishery, and Sun-dried salt production. The foundation of the local economy in Ngapudaw is agriculture, in which women play a significant role. Women work on a variety of projects, such as planting, harvesting, and processing crops. Local agricultural surveys indicate that women make up almost half of the workforce in the agricultural industry, which mostly focuses on

aquaculture and rice farming. Small-scale entrepreneurship is common among rural women, who start local companies in industries like market selling, handicrafts, and food processing. To assist women in women's business endeavors, microfinance programs have been developed to give women access to training and credit. According to the ratio of the population of Ngapudaw Township, more people are living in rural areas than in urban areas. According to the ratio of men and women, it is observed that the number of women is higher than the number of men. Women in the rural areas of Ngapudaw Township mainly work in agriculture as women's livelihood. Even before the time of farming, the women farm owners work together with women's husbands to buy seeds for planting, buy fertilizers, and buy pesticides. In addition to buying the food that is needed to feed the farm workers during farming, the women also have to buy the small construction materials (Nails, Hnee, etc.) that are needed for the construction of houses on the farm. At the beginning of farming, these women have to plant paddy, cook and feed the workers, do what is needed, build friendships with the workers, and supervise to ensure that there is no wastage during the work.

3.4 Women's Participation in Economic, Social, and Environmental Activities in Ngapudaw Township

In Ngapudaw Township, women's involvement in economic, social, and environmental endeavors is essential to the sustainability of rural communities. In many community activities and conservation initiatives, women play important roles. Women's participation goes beyond domestic duties to include initiatives that promote social cohesion, local economies, and environmental preservation. But in spite of women's contributions, rural women frequently encounter particular difficulties, such as limited educational opportunities, limited decision-making authority, and the combined weight of paid and unpaid labor, which might prevent women from fully engaging in community development initiatives. In Ngapudaw Township, knowing the socioeconomic features and looking at the unique roles and difficulties of women in these activities gives important information about the community's advantages and disadvantages. These observations also point to the possibility of strengthening

women's contributions by tackling important obstacles like financial constraints, low educational attainment, and social conventions that influence gender roles.

Women have to pay in advance to the owners of the fields and settle women's livelihood. At the time of farming, women had to plant paddy, carry seedlings, harvest paddy, thresh paddy, and carry paddy for advance wages. Women in the rural areas of Ngapudaw Township have to do housework as well as work in agriculture. In addition, women manage to take care of women's parents and take care of women's children as well as manage the family's livelihood. Due to the family workload, women are less able to participate in making important decisions for the household and participate in village development activities.

Women in rural areas of Ngapudaw Township take an active part in local decision-making and community organizations. Women in rural areas of Ngapudaw Township participate in health and education committees, women advocate resources, and add to conversations about community needs. To solve concerns about community welfare, child education, and maternal health, women's involvement is essential. More and more women are assuming leadership positions in neighborhood organizations, supporting community development and women's rights.

In Ngapudaw, women play a vital role in environmental preservation initiatives. Women frequently use traditional knowledge to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner, emphasizing methods that save regional ecosystems. This includes taking part in sustainable fishing methods and neighborhood-based reforestation initiatives. The role of women in rural areas in promoting sustainable resource management and environmental conservation is growing. Women in rural areas of Ngapudaw Township take part in efforts to raise awareness of the effects of climate change and to encourage behaviors that make women's communities more resilient. Women's involvement in social and economic activities may be restricted by cultural expectations and traditional gender standards. Women in rural areas may be deterred from assuming leadership positions or participating in public debates on local issues by societal beliefs. Accessing vital resources like land, credit, and training can be difficult for women. These restrictions lessen women's influence on community

development and prevent women from fully participating in economic activity. Women in rural areas are more susceptible to the consequences of climate change, which can worsen already-existing disparities. Women's livelihoods and general well-being are disproportionately impacted by droughts, flooding, and shifting weather patterns.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY ANALYSIS

4.1 Survey Profile

Ngapudaw Township is located on the Bay of Bengal coast in the Ayeyarwady Region. The population of Ngapudaw is estimated at 150,000 according to the most recent census, with women and children making up a sizable share of the population. The study started with a pilot's plan to collect data before distributing a survey at Kan Seik Village. As for sample sizes, 121 women in six villages were set to collect data. The 121 women were 19 farmers, 40 casual labor, 46 fisheries, 13 small-scale businesses, 2 craftsmanship, and 1 home gardening. The survey was prepared and collected from June 2024 to July 2024. With a diverse population of ethnic groups, mostly Bamar, the township is mainly rural. The study focused on five villages: Kan Su, Wet Su, Tagon Taing, Pyan Yae Kyaw, Kan Seik, and Kattayar Wa in Ngapudaw Township.

Table (4.1) Selected Villages in Ngapudaw Township (N = 121)

Name of Village	No. of Household	Population		Selected Household for survey
		Male	Female	
Kan Su	94	241	245	31
Wet Su	309	659	731	30
Tagon Taing	60	93	92	15
Pyan Yae Kyaw	431	1542	1592	15
Kan Seik	88	182	184	15
Kattayar Wa	196	1284	1312	15

Source: Survey data, 2024

The selected villages vary significantly in terms of household numbers and population demographics, ranging from Kan Su Village, with 94 households and a total population of 486, to Pyan Yae Kyaw Village, which boasts 431 households and

a population of 3,134. This diversity allows for a comprehensive analysis of varying socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by women in rural areas. Villages with a balanced gender ratio, such as Kan Seik and Tagon Taing, can shed light on the participation challenges women may face in patriarchal structures.

Wet Su Village, with a significant female population (731 females to 659 males), provides an opportunity to explore gender dynamics in a community with a noticeable female majority. The gender distribution across the selected villages offers valuable insight into women's roles and participation in community activities. Villages like Wet Su and Kattayar Wa exhibit slight female majorities, suggesting a context where women's perspectives and contributions may be particularly pronounced. Each village was chosen not only for its demographic characteristics but also for its potential to contribute to understanding community development mechanisms.

4.2 Survey Design

The survey design is a descriptive analysis based on primary data. The interview questionnaire is used with open and closed-type questions from primary sources. To gather information, the study began with a sampling process before launching a survey. 121 households in six villages were selected as the sample size. Publications such as books, periodicals, Central Statistical Organization, and Township profiles provide secondary data and information. To supplement the study, data, censuses, publications, reports, and documents are also used. One of the Secondary data sources was the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS), Ngapudaw Township. The questionnaires were divided into four parts: Basic Information, Women's Participation in Economic Activities, Women's Participation in Social Activities, and Participation in Environmental Conservation.

4.3 Analysis of Survey Results

The purpose of the study is to identify women's participation in economic activities, social activities, and environmental conservation in rural areas. The study seeks to explore how women participate in economic activities like farming, infrastructure, and community development, as well as women's involvement in social activities. Additionally, it examines women's practices related to environmental

conservation, particularly in waste management and sanitation, to assess the impact of rural women on sustainable development.

4.3.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Women

The first part of the women's profits reveals socio-demographic information. The study identifies women's characteristics, where to examine whether these women show signs of different factors or not. Table (4.2) shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the women in the study area.

Table (4.2) Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Women (N = 121)

Descriptions	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Age		
18 years and under	2	1.7
19-30 years	11	9.1
31-40 years	37	30.6
41-50 years	42	34.7
Above 50 years	29	24.0
Marital Status		
Single	5	4.1
Married	112	92.6
Widower	3	2.5
Divorce	1	0.8
Education Status		
No Education	3	2.5
Primary School Level	85	70.2
Middle School Level	23	19.0
High School Level	10	8.3
Household Members Size		
3 people and under	30	24.8
4 to 6 people	83	68.6
7 to 9 people	8	6.6
Main Income Job		
Farming	19	15.7
Causal Labor	40	33.1
Fishery	46	38.0

Small Scale Business	13	10.7
Craftmanship	2	1.7
Home Gardening	1	0.8
Yearly Household Income Status		
5000000 MMK and Under	46	38.0
50000001 to 10000000 MMK	53	43.8
10000001 to 15000000 MMK	22	18.2
Flooring Status		
Plank	116	95.9
Bamboo	4	3.3
Concrete	1	0.8
Walling Status		
Plank	24	19.8
Bamboo	1	0.8
Stone Plate	7	5.8
Brick	2	1.7
Dani	87	71.9
Roofing Status		
Dani	81	66.9
Zinc Sheet	40	33.1
Farm Property Status		
No Farming	102	84.3
2 Acres and Under	3	2.5
2.1 Acre - 5 Acre	8	6.6
5.1 Acre - 20 Acre	6	5.0
Above 20 Acre	2	1.7

Source: Survey data, 2024

According to the data in Table (4.2), most women are between 31 and 50 years old, with 65.3% falling within these age groups. This suggests that individuals with considerable life and work experience may drive economic activities and development initiatives. There is a notable lack of younger individuals (18 years and under and 19-30 years), indicating that efforts may need to be made to engage younger populations in economic activities. The presence of a significant number of

women over 50 years may contribute to a wealth of experience, which can be beneficial in mentoring younger participants in economic initiatives.

The overwhelming majority of women (92.6%) are married, which may imply that economic initiatives could benefit from targeting families and recognizing the roles that spouses play in these activities. With only a small percentage of individuals being single (4.1%) or divorced (0.8%), it may be beneficial to consider how economic programs can address the unique needs and contributions of these groups, even if women are in the minority.

Marital status can significantly influence economic engagement, responsibilities, and decision-making processes. The high percentage of married individuals may affect how resources are allocated and how families engage in economic initiatives.

A significant majority (70.2%) of women have only completed primary school, suggesting that while foundational education is common, there may be barriers to advancing to higher levels of education. The data shows a steep decline in educational attainment beyond primary school, with only 19.0% reaching middle school and a mere 8.3% completing high school. This could indicate challenges related to access, financial constraints, or cultural factors that prevent continued education. The education levels reported may impact the women's ability to engage fully in economic activities, particularly those that require higher skills or education. Programs aimed at promoting further education and vocational training may be beneficial to enhance skills and improve economic opportunities.

Most women belong to households with 4 to 6 members, indicating a trend toward medium-sized families, which may have implications for resource sharing and economic contributions. Nearly a quarter of women have 3 or fewer household members, suggesting that smaller family units are also significant. These smaller households may have different economic needs and priorities compared to larger ones. With only 6.6% of women in households of 7 to 9 members, large families are not the norm in this population. This could indicate potential shifts in family dynamics or preferences for smaller family sizes.

Most women (15.7%) are involved in farming, which is less common than other livelihood activities like fishing or casual labor. The majority (33.1%) engage in

casual labor, indicating economic insecurity or limited access to stable employment. Most (38.0%) work in the fishery sector, a major economic activity due to access to aquatic resources. Small-scale businesses (10.7%) are also prevalent, but not as commonplace as casual labor or fishing. Traditional crafts are practiced by a small segment, suggesting limited market opportunities or a decline in these skills.

Most women (81.8%) earn 10,000,000 MMK or less annually, suggesting a relatively low average income level. This could impact overall spending power and economic stability within the community. The high percentage of women earning 5,000,000 MMK or under, combined with those in the moderate range (5,000,001 - 10,000,000 MMK), suggests that many households may face economic challenges, limiting women's ability to invest in education, health, and other essential services. The data indicates opportunities for economic initiatives aimed at increasing household incomes, improving financial literacy, and fostering entrepreneurship, particularly for those in lower income brackets.

In the house condition of women, most of the women use planks for flooring (95.9%), Dani for walling (71.9%), and Dani for roofing (66.9%). The local materials are used for house construction in rural areas.

A strong trend toward non-farming households, with 84.3% of women indicating women do not engage in any farming activities. Among those who do have land, most operate on a small scale, with only a few households owning significant acreage. This suggests that farming may not be the primary livelihood for the majority of the population, reflecting a potential shift toward urbanization or alternative economic activities. The limited involvement in farming, particularly on larger scales, could also indicate a reliance on other income sources, such as small businesses or employment outside agriculture.

4.3.2 Women's Participation in Economic Activities

Table (4.3), The data shows that all women (100%) are engaged in some form of economic participation. This suggests a high level of involvement in economic activities. This full participation rate highlights the importance of economic roles

among these women, likely to include activities such as agriculture, small businesses, or local services.

Table (4.3) Women's Participation in Economic Activities

Women's Participation in Economic Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Yes	121	100.0
No	0	0
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women are involved in infrastructure development, with 87 women (71.9%) engaged in infrastructure-related economic activities such as road construction, bridge construction, footpath construction, renovation of the village pond, and transport systems to connect with markets. 6.6% (8 women) were involved in skill and training activities like snack making, tailoring, food processing, and leadership. Despite the low participation rate, the training programs are essential for achieving financial independence and may have long-term advantages by improving personal abilities and diversifying revenue streams. 21.5% (26 women) participated in Savings and Loan Groups (focused on women). The groups are instrumental for financial security, particularly for women, by providing access to funds that support small businesses and household needs.

Table (4.4), that most women (56.2%) are listeners in village meetings related to economic activities, indicating that more than half are passive participants and may require encouragement or capacity-building to take on more active roles. About 37.2% of women are discussants, indicating a fairly strong level, where women contribute but do not lead discussions. Only a small fraction (6.6%) of women takes on leadership roles in activities related to economics, pointing to a need for more leadership development to encourage greater involvement from community members.

Table (4.4) Role of Women in Economic Activities

Role of Women in Economic Activities	Number of women	Percentage (%)
A leading discussant	8	6.6
Discussant	45	37.2
A listener	68	56.2
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women faced challenges participating in economic activities, see Table (4.5). 13 women (10.7%) could not fully participate due to women's low education. 82 women (67.8%) could not fully participate in economic activities because of family responsibilities. 26 women (21.5%) could not fully participate in economic activities because women have to earn money for their family's livelihood.

Table (4.5) Challenges of Women's Participation in Economic Activities

Challenges of Women's Participation in Economic Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Low education	13	10.7
Family Responsibilities	82	67.8
Earn money for the family's livelihood	26	21.5
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women overcome the challenges in the areas. 13 women (10.7%) with educational difficulties, couldn't yet overcome this problem. However, women who faced the challenges of education participated in activities unrelated to education as much as women could by attending the snack-making training. 82 women (67.8%) don't have enough time for family work, overcome their challenges by attending training, participating in village meetings as much as possible, and participating in village-based construction activities when women have less work. The 26 women (21.5%) have not yet overcome the difficulty of earning money for the family's livelihood.

There are 2 groups in the selected areas: the Women Entrepreneurship Group (WEG) and the Women Income Generating Group (WIG). The purpose of the WEG is to implement women's entrepreneurial activities. This group was formed in

collaboration with UNDP and the Department of Government Cooperatives. The next group, WIG was formed by the Network Activities Group (Local NGO) to support the livelihood of fishermen by providing livelihood training, supporting cash for income generation, providing training on water resources conservation, laws and regulations of fishery, and supporting fishery tools.

Table (4.6) Most of the women are involved in organizations that focus on women's entrepreneurial activities (46.3%) and income generation activities for fishermen (38.8%). Active efforts to promote women's economic role and independence have been highlighted. Mainly, the groups work on providing capacity-building training, savings and loans, training in income-generating activities, etc. A small portion of women (14.9%) were not affiliated with any organization; It suggests that some remain outside of formal group participation, although most participate in collective activities.

Table (4.6) Women's Participation in Women's Groups at the Village

Women's Participation in Women's Groups at the Village	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Women Entrepreneur Group	56	46.3
Women Income Group	47	38.8
Total	103	85.1

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women suggest the factors to more participate in economic activities, see Table (4.7). 77 women (63.6%) suggest that there will be more women's participation in economic activities if women can get women's rights, prioritize women, respect women, get equal gender rights, change cultural norms, and there is a need to not discriminate based on gender. A woman (0.8%) suggests that if women get cash support, more women can participate in these activities. A woman (0.8%) suggests that women themselves need to be willing to participate. Two women (1.7%) suggest that women could participate more if women could support women's capacity-building courses and small livelihood businesses. 6 women (5.0%) suggest that women should be more involved in women's groups in the village to enrich knowledge and strengthen participation. 34 women (28.1%) didn't respond to more participation in economic activities.

Table (4.7) Factors that Encourage Women for More Participation in Economic Activities

Factors that Encourage Women for More Participation in Economic Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
To give women rights, prioritize women, and respect women, not discriminate based on gender, to give equal rights to gender, and to change cultural norms	77	63.6
Cash support	1	0.8
Willing to participate	1	0.8
Women's capacity-building courses and small livelihood businesses	2	1.7
Should be more involved in women's groups	6	5.0
Total	87	71.9

Source: Survey data, 2024

Table (4.8) that the largest group (47.9%) is engaged in agriculture activities as casual labor, suggesting that a substantial portion of women rely on informal or temporary work for income. This highlights potential issues such as job insecurity and economic vulnerability. (37.2%) 45 women are not participating in agriculture activities, participate in small businesses related to economic activities. A smaller group (15.7%) are farm owners, which reflects the presence of agricultural activity as an economic contribution among women. Most of the women either work as casual laborers or are not engaged in agriculture activities, with only a minority owning farms.

Table (4.8) Women's Participation by Type of Work in Agriculture Activities

Women's Participation by Type of Work in Agriculture Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Farm Owner	19	15.7
Causal Labor	58	47.9
Total	77	63.6

Source: Survey data, 2024

Table (4.9), data shows that nearly one-person to three-person female workers of women's households (63.6%) are actively involved in agricultural work. This

highlights the crucial role that female labor plays in the agricultural sector, particularly in rural or farming communities. However, 36.4% of households report no female participation in agriculture, suggesting that a notable minority either depends on male labor, hires external workers, or that women in these households are engaged in other forms of work or responsibilities. While most households rely on female labor for agriculture, a substantial portion do not, reflecting a division in the roles of women in agricultural work across households. This points to variability in household labor dynamics and the role of women in agricultural production.

Table (4.9) Female Workers Who Engaged in Agriculture Activities

Female Workers Who Engaged in Agriculture Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Participated in other activities related to economic	44	36.4
1-3 person (participated in Agriculture Activities)	77	63.6
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

4.3.3 Women's Participation in Social Activities

Table (4.10), The data indicates that 93.4% of women (113 women) are actively engaged in social activities, while 6.6% (8 women) are not participating in social engagements.

Table (4.10) Women's Participation in Social Activities

Women's Participation in Social Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Yes	113	93.4
No	8	6.6
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women suggest the activities that women are involved in social activities. 113 women (93.4%) responded that women participate in women's groups in the village, attend village meetings, attend environmental awareness meetings, share knowledge, organize and lead religious festivals, participate as committee members in village development committees, participate in health-related activities such as

vaccinations, participating in health education programs, promoting maternal health, child nutrition, participate in educational activities such as parent-teacher associations, and attend educational meetings.

Most women responded to the main challenges of participation in social activities. 30 women (24.8%) responded that the main challenges are family workload, and earning a livelihood. 3 women (2.5%) responded that lack of knowledge and low education are the main barriers. 7 women (5.8%) responded that permission of local authority, and gender inequity are the main challenges for women. 81 women (66.9%) did not respond to the challenges of participation in social activities.

Most women suggest the ways that can overcome the challenges: promoting awareness within families about the importance of sharing household responsibilities, providing women with access to flexible, home-based income-generating opportunities (e.g., handicrafts, online work) that allow women to earn a livelihood while managing household responsibilities, establishing mentorship initiatives where women with more experience can guide and support less-educated women, creating a supportive environment for skill and knowledge development, conducting community awareness campaigns to highlight the value of women's participation in social and economic activities.

Most women responded to the factors that more women's participation in social activities, see Table (4.11). 80 women (66.1%) responded that women need to balance women's workload. The factors state that how domestic or professional responsibilities are a primary obstacle to women's participation in social activities. While not as commonly identified, gender discrimination (33.9%) is also seen as an important barrier, suggesting that some women recognize societal inequalities as a factor that affects women's involvement. Women feel that men don't respect and value women, and men influence decision-making.

Table (4.11) Factors that Engage More Women's Participation in Social Activities

Factors that Engage More Women's Participation in Social Activities	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Balance in workload	80	66.1
Balance gender discrimination	41	33.9
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

4.3.4 Women's Participation in Environmental Conservation

100.0% (121 women) of women are actively involved in environmental conservation activities, which is a positive indicator of community engagement in environmental issues.

Most women suggest the activities that women involved the environmental conservation, see Table (4.12). 48 women (39.7%) suggest that women are focused on environmental education and awareness, indicating a recognition of the importance of environmental issues, and only 73 women (60.3%) are involved in practical conservation activities like planting, Group Garbage collection, Using the Using a fuel-efficient stove. This highlights a gap between awareness and action. Programs that promote both education and practical engagement, such as community planting events, and conservation of water resources, could help bridge this gap and encourage more households to take an active role in environmental conservation.

Table (4.12) Women's Participation in Environmental Conservation

Women's Participation in Environmental Conservation	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Environmental Awareness	48	39.7
Planting Program with Environmental Conservation, Conservation of water resources, Group's Garbage collection, Using the Using a fuel-efficient stove	73	60.3
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Most women have challenges to participate in environmental conservation in the selected villages. Women responded that there is a lack of compliance with the rules and regulations regarding environmental conservation, lack of knowledge, lack of ability to participate due to family workload, lack of environmental conservation awareness events, and lack of education.

Table (4.13), the data shows that only 22.3% of women are using fuel-efficient stoves, which suggests a low adoption rate of this technology within the community. The high percentage (77.7%) of households not using fuel-efficient stoves may indicate potential barriers such as cost, lack of awareness, or limited access to these

appliances. This presents an opportunity for interventions aimed at increasing awareness about the benefits of fuel-efficient stoves, as well as programs that could assist households in acquiring women. Enhancing adoption rates could lead to significant improvements in energy efficiency, reduced fuel costs, and positive environmental impacts, making it an important area for community development efforts.

Table (4.13) Using the Fuel-Efficient Stove by Women

Using the Fuel-Efficient Stove by Women	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	22.3
No	94	77.7
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Table (4.14), that most (84.3%) of women rely on fly-proof latrines, indicating that basic sanitation facilities are most commonly used in the surveyed population. Only 7.4% of women have access to flushing toilets, highlighting limited access to modern sanitation infrastructure. A small but notable portion (8.3%) still use pit toilets, suggesting that some women lack access to even basic latrine systems and may face greater health risks due to poorer sanitation.

Table (4.14) Type of Toilets by Women who use

Type of Toilets by Women who use	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Fly-proof latrine	102	84.3
Flushing toilet	9	7.4
Pit toilet	10	8.3
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

Table (4.15), the fact that 33.1% of women throw women's waste into rivers is alarming, as this contributes to water pollution and poses risks to ecosystems and

human health. This suggests a need for better waste management solutions and public awareness of the environmental impact. The largest group (43.8%) dispose of women's waste in landfills, indicating that many women have access to some level of formal waste disposal infrastructure. About 23.1% of women burn women's waste, which is a common practice in areas without waste collection services, but it poses risks due to toxic emissions and environmental harm.

Table (4.15) Waste Disposal of Women Who Practice

Waste Disposal of Women Who Practice	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
Burn	28	23.1
Throw into the river	40	33.1
Disposal in landfill	53	43.8
Total	121	100.0

Source: Survey data, 2024

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

The study aims to identify the economic and social participation and environmental conservation of women in rural areas, to investigate the activities and challenges of economic and social participation of women in rural areas, and to explore the activities and challenges of environmental conservation of women in rural areas.

This study is based on interviews with 121 women of 121 households from 6 villages of 4 village tracts. The socio-demographic characteristics of the women are shown in percentages of gender, age, education level, occupation, household size, household yearly income, type of business, employment, house condition, and landholding size.

The rural women's participation in the rural economy is measured by four factors. These are basic information, women's participation in economic activities, women's participation in social activities, and participation in environmental conservation.

The study reveals a demographic trend with the most women aged 31-50 years (92.6%) married, and completing primary school. Most women come from medium-sized families with 4 to 6 members. The fishery sector is the primary livelihood for 38.0% of women, highlighting the community's reliance on aquatic resources. Most women have an annual income of 10,000,000 MMK or less, reflecting a low average income level. Housing conditions favor locally sourced traditional materials, such as plank flooring, Dani for walling, and Dani for roofing.

The study reveals a high level of economic participation among women, with each woman (100%) involved in some form of economic activity. Women's participation occurs with varying levels of engagement, challenges, and support systems. Women play a significant role in economic activities, particularly in infrastructure projects, with 71.9% contributing to these projects. However, only 6.6%

are involved in skill-building activities, which can lead to financial independence and skill development. Savings and Loan Groups provide financial security and enable small business support. Women often attend economic-related village meetings but are passive listeners. Only 6.6% hold leadership roles, indicating a gap in leadership participation. Women face significant barriers to economic participation, including family responsibilities and low education. The Women Entrepreneurship Group (WEG) and Women Income Generating Group (WIG) have enhanced women's economic roles, but 14.9% remain unaffiliated. Gender equality is a strong call, with 63.6% suggesting changes in terms of women's rights, and reducing discrimination could enhance participation. Women's economic roles are divided, with 47.1% working as casual laborers in agriculture and 15.7% owning farms. This diversity suggests a need for flexible, inclusive approaches in economic programs to effectively support women's varied roles.

The study found that 93.4% of women actively participate in social activities, including health promotion, education, and community development. However, 24.8% face barriers due to family workload and earning a livelihood, while 2.5% lack knowledge and low education. Gender inequity and local authority restrictions also hinder women's participation. To mitigate these challenges, women suggest family awareness of shared household responsibilities, flexible income opportunities, and mentorship from experienced women. Balancing domestic and professional responsibilities is the primary factor for increasing participation. Gender discrimination is identified as a significant challenge, highlighting the need for cultural shifts promoting gender equity. Programs promoting equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities, skill-building, and financial independence could empower women to overcome these barriers and increase their participation in social initiatives.

100% of women are involved in environmental conservation, indicating a shared understanding of environmental issues. However, a significant portion (60.3%) engage in hands-on conservation activities, such as planting and using fuel-efficient stoves. Barriers to participation include family workload, lack of knowledge, and limited education. Only 22.3% of women use fuel-efficient stoves, indicating low adoption. Most women rely on fly-proof latrines, while only 7.4% have access to flushing toilets. Waste disposal practices vary, with 33.1% disposed of in rivers and 43.8% using landfills. The findings highlight the need for improved waste

management infrastructure and public education on sustainable waste disposal practices.

5.2 Suggestions

Local government agencies, NGOs focused on women's empowerment (like UNDP), and educational institutions should collaborate to create and facilitate training and skill-building programs that go beyond infrastructure roles to include diverse skills, like financial management, entrepreneurship, and specialized trades. NGOs should provide women with tools for financial independence and career growth, only 6.6% are engaged in skill-building activities, creating accessible and locally relevant training opportunities would provide women with tools for financial independence and career growth. Women's groups (WEG and WIG) should implement leadership training and mentorship programs within existing economic initiatives, with support from local NGOs and community leaders who can mentor participants. Encouraging women to take on leadership roles could shift the current dynamic from passive listening to active participation and leadership. Local businesses and cooperatives, in collaboration with women's organizations and local government, should develop policies that support family-friendly practices to create family-friendly economic initiatives that provide flexible working hours, childcare, and educational resources. Implement literacy and basic education programs alongside economic activities, making participation more feasible for women balancing family duties. Community development organizations and microfinance institutions should lead the creation and training of Savings and Loan groups, ensuring accessibility for all women to cover more women and provide additional resources for financial literacy, budgeting, and savings. Incorporate mentorship opportunities within these groups for knowledge-sharing and business support. NGOs, women's rights organizations, and community leaders should coordinate advocacy efforts and conduct community campaigns to raise awareness of women's contributions to the local economy, emphasizing the importance of gender equality. Leaders of WEG and WIG, along with community facilitators, should organize informational sessions and personal outreach to encourage participation to implement outreach initiatives to encourage unaffiliated women to join existing women's groups, emphasizing the benefits of collective participation.

Implementing these suggestions will require collaboration among various stakeholders, including local government, NGOs, community leaders, and educational

institutions. By addressing the specific challenges identified in the study, these initiatives can foster an environment that supports women's economic participation, enhances their skills, and promotes gender equality, ultimately leading to greater economic empowerment for women in the community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX – 1

Mapping of Ngapudaw Township



APPENDIX – 2

Survey Questions

“A Study on Women’s Participation in Rural Economy at Ngapudaw Township, Ayeyarwady Region”

Informed Consent

My name is Hla Hsan Yee. As part of my master’s course in development studies, I am studying a thesis under the title "A Study on Women’s Participation in Rural Economy at Ngaputaw Township." Therefore, we kindly request that you take some time to participate in this research survey. Your help is valuable for rural women's participation in economic, social, and environmental conservation activities. This assistance is voluntary, and you can withdraw from the survey at any time if you do not want to participate. We promise that your response information will be kept secure and used only for this research survey. Thank you for helping to complete this research survey.

Date of registration. Name of Registrant.

Respondent's Name..... Village Name.

Village Tract Name.

Name of organization (if applicable).

(A) Age range.

- ☐ 18 years old and under
- ☐ 19 years - 30 years
- ☐ 31 - 40 years
- ☐ 41 - 50 years
- ☐ Above 50 years old

(B) Marital status.

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widow
- ☐ Divorce

(C) Education status/literacy status.

- ☐ No education
- ☐ Primary School Level
- ☐ Middle High School Level
- ☐ High School Level
- ☐ Degree

(D) Number of family members.

- ☐ ≥ 3
- ☐ 4 to 6
- ☐ 7 to 9
- ☐ ≥ 10

(E) Respondent's main occupation (can answer more than one)

- ☐ Farming, Fishery, and Livestock
- ☐ Random
- ☐ Small Scale Business
- ☐ Homework
- ☐ Government Staff and Private Staff

(F) Average family income during the year. (To be expressed in Myanmar kyats)

- ☐ ≤ 5000000
- ☐ 5000001 – 10000000
- ☐ 10000001 – 15000000
- ☐ 15000001 – 20000000
- ☐ ≥ 200000001

(G) Type of house

Flooring

- ☐ Plank
- ☐ Bamboo
- ☐ Concrete

Walling

- ☐ Plank
- ☐ Bamboo
- ☐ Stone Plate
- ☐ Brick
- ☐ Dani

Roofing

- ☐ Dani
- ☐ Zinc Sheet

(H)Farm Property Status

- ☐ No Farming
- ☐ < 3 Acre
- ☐ 3 Acre - 5 Acre
- ☐ 5.1 Acre – 20 Acre
- ☐ > 20 Acre

II. Participation in Economic Activities

(1) Are you involved in the economic activities of your area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(2) Which economic activity are you involved in in your area?

(3) Which role are you usually involved in economic activities?

- ☐ A leading discussant
- ☐ A Discussant
- ☐ A listener

(4) What are the main challenges you face in participating in economic activities?

(5) If yes, how did you overcome these challenges?

(6) What groups are there in your village? State the objective and main activities of these groups.

(7) If yes, which group do you belong to?

(8) What factors need to be changed more about women's participation in the economic activities of your village?

(9) What role do you play in agriculture activities related to the economy in your area?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Farm Owner
- ☐ Casual laborer

(10) In agriculture activities related to economic activities, how many female workers are there in your household?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ Over 6

III. Participation in Social Activities

(1) Are you involved in social activities in your area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(2) What social activity have you almost always participated in?

(3) What are the main challenges you face in participating in social activities?

(4) What do you think are the ways that can overcome these challenges?

(5) What do you think needs to change so that women in your village can participate more in social activities?

IV. Participation in Environmental Conservation

(1) Are you involved in environmental awareness activities in your area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(2) What environmental conservation activity are you involved in in your area?

- ☐ Not Involved
- ☐ Environmental Education and Awareness
- ☐ Planting program with conservation of natural environment

(3) Do you use a fuel-efficient stove in your home?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(4) What type of toilet do you use in your home?

- ☐ Fly-proof latrine
- ☐ Flushing toilet
- ☐ Pit toilet
- ☐ No toilet

(5) How do you dispose of your household waste?

- ☐ Burn
- ☐ Throw into the river
- ☐ Put it in the pit and make compost
- ☐ Disposal in landfill
- ☐ No