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*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful
committed citizens can change the world.*

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

List of Abbreviations

AFRO	– Action for Reach-Out
DMSC	– Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee
HIV	– Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MoHT	– Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Myanmar
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEA	– Southeast Asia
SOG	– Self-organised group
STI	– Sexually Transmitted Infection
STD	– Sexually Transmitted Disease
UN	– United Nations

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Addressing Sex Tourism in Myanmar through Empowering Participation of Women in Self-Organised Groups

1. Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

Myanmar is a country that is emerging from almost half a decade of military rule.¹ Not many people had interaction with foreigners and furthermore, human rights violations, for instance torture, murder and rape, characterized daily life for many of the country's inhabitants.² In 2010 elections were held in Myanmar and censorship laws were reduced. Additionally hundreds of political prisoners were freed including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace-Price winner and opposition leader. These developments lead to an opening of the country, which have resulted in a considerable rise in tourism since 2010.³ In 2012, over 1 million tourists travelled to Myanmar for the first time in the country's history.⁴ Experts assume that tourism will grow rapidly in Myanmar.⁵ The Tourism Master Plan points out that 3.01 million visitors will travel to Myanmar by 2015 and this number will rise to 7.48 million people by 2020.⁶

¹ Schulz, 2013.

² Cultural Survival, 2014.

³ The New York Times, 2014.

⁴ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012.

⁵ CNN Travel, 2013.

⁶ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012.

A significant tourism sector creates impacts and consequences for the country.⁷ Planning and management can help minimizing the negative aspects and strengthen the positive impacts of tourism. Tourism can positively affect the economy and for example create a need for labour and thus reduce unemployment.⁸ On the other hand, tourism can be a cause for human rights violations for example: displacement due to tourism development, water injustice, discrimination of indigenous peoples, exploitative working conditions for communities, exploitation of children and women etc.⁹

One form of tourism that has significant direct human rights impacts is sex tourism, which is a current global challenge.¹⁰ Experts predict that sex tourism will also be on the rise in Myanmar due to its increase in tourism and the developments in its neighbouring countries¹¹ Prevalent issues in this context are physical and psychological violence, negative impacts on health for instance sexually transmittable diseases.^{12 13} As a consequence of the rapid tourism development, combined with its geographical location between Asian hotspots of sex tourism, there is a very high risk that sex tourism, and it's potentially included human rights violations, might also become prevalent in Myanmar. As the tourism industry is presently in its early stages in Myanmar, the government and civil society have the possibility to get inspiration from other governments, groups and organisations and use their experiences in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar to address sex tourism.

⁷ Archer, Cooper & Ruhanen, 2005, p.79.

⁸ Idem.

⁹ Tourism Concern, 2014.

¹⁰ Oppermann, p.252, 1999.

¹¹ Kyaw, 2012.

¹² Swarbrooke, 1999, p.74.

¹³ Farley & Barkan, 2008, pp.38-39.

All around the world, NGOs, civil society and other stakeholders make use of the concept of empowering participation to address various human rights violations, especially in the context of women's rights.¹⁴ The concepts of empowerment and participation are highly interlinked and can be seen as a continuous process.¹⁵

This thesis explores how empowering participation can be used to address sex tourism in Myanmar. As the concept can be used in various contexts, examples will be given (1) on how to apply the method both with women that are in a vulnerable position, for instance poverty or unemployment, and risk to work as a sex worker against their will and (2) on how to apply empowered participation with women that are working in sex tourism as sex workers who may want to address potential human rights violations in the context of their work. The thesis focuses hereby on one specific types of participation, which is self-organising. A self-organised group refers to any group that consists of people that have direct experience with the issue they are working on.¹⁶

By using various examples of women's participation in self-organised groups from around Asia, recommendations will be given at the end of the document on how empowering participation can be used and supported by the government in order to address sex tourism and potentially reduce this phenomenon's negative human rights impacts.

¹⁴ USAID, 2012.

¹⁵ Pettit, 2012, p.2

¹⁶ Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), 2007, p.6.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe how the concept of empowering participation through self-organisation of women can be used to address potential issues related to sex tourism in Myanmar.

1.2. Research Question

How can the concept of empowering participation of women through self-organisation be used to address sex tourism in Myanmar?

1.3. Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided in order to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. The researcher developed the definitions not marked with a citation by herself, since some of the commonly used definitions use non-empowering terms, or don't have a holistic view of the phenomenon.

1.3.1. Sex Work

This term is used in this paper to refer to the act of offering a sexual service for payment to someone.¹⁷ Payment can either mean money or goods. The author does not make use of the term prostitution, because it is a stigmatizing, non-empowering and discriminating term.

1.3.2. Sex Tourism

As will be discussed in the literature review on the following pages, sex tourism is a phenomenon that includes a whole range of topics. This creates challenges in defining sex tourism in an adequate and holistic way.

¹⁷ Lemert, 1951, p.238.

In this document, the author defines sex tourism as sexual service(s) purchased by a tourist. Purchasing means here either a payment in money or in goods.

1.3.3. Sexual Exploitation

“The term “sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.” (United Nations Secretary-General’s Bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, 2003)

1.3.4. Civil Society

“Civil society is an “arena of power, inequality, struggle and cooperation that is populated by a wide array of voluntary and non-voluntary groups” (Alagappa, 2004, p.5) and is additionally “a distinct public sphere of organization, communication and reflective discourse and governance among individuals and groups that take collective action deploying civil means to influence the state and its policies but not capture state power, and whose activities are not motivated by profit.” (Alagappa, 2004, p.9)

1.3.5. Empowerment

Empowerment is a “multidimensional and interdependent process, involving social, political, economic and legal changes that will enable people living in poverty and marginalisation to participate meaningfully in shaping their own futures.” (Pettit, p.2, 2012)

1.3.6. Participation

Participation means, in this study, the involvement of women in an organized activity without obtaining payment with the purpose to attain a common goal.¹⁸

1.3.7. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism, as defined by the United Nations (UN), is "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNWTO, 2005, pp.11-12).

1.4. Significance of the Study

Myanmar is a country that emerges from over fifty years of military rule and political, social and economical isolation. This can be an explanation for the existing lack of scientific literature on various human rights related topics in Myanmar. These topics need to be addressed through research in the following years; in particular, gender relations, women's human rights and sexual violence are not covered by the literature. This thesis aims to contribute to this gap.

Government officials of Myanmar see tourism as a major future economic income source.¹⁹ A large number of literature in form of reports, legal texts and policies have been published on the development of tourism in Myanmar by both national and international organisations. The development of sustainable tourism seems to be a prevalent topic in these documents and a lot of attention is brought to the fact

¹⁸ Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p.726.

¹⁹ Asian Development Bank, 2013.

that tourism should benefit the local community.²⁰ However, none of the documents mention sex tourism, which can be an obstacle to sustainable tourism, in their content. This thesis gives clear instructions and recommendations on how the concept of empowering participation can be used to address sex tourism in Myanmar, which is lacking from the current discussions around sustainable tourism in the country.

In the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020, the State of Myanmar mentions that a “community-based support tourism program” (MoHT, 2012, p.76) will be developed and that this program will include the involvement of the whole community with special consideration given to the active participation of potentially vulnerable groups as for example women, ethnic groups or the poor.²¹ Nonetheless the program makes no mention of sex tourism and how the problem should be addressed.

A strong link can be established between the rise in tourism and the parallel rise in sex tourism.²² Participation of women could be a powerful instrument to address human rights violations in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar. However, when analysing the various legal and policy documents of the State of Myanmar it becomes apparent that the processes of empowering participation is mentioned only in a short unspecific paragraph in the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020. This study shows (1) why it would be important to consider empowering participation as a useful instrument during and after the economic development of Myanmar, especially in relation to sex tourism and women’s rights, and (2) how the

²⁰ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013.

²¹ MoHT, 2012, Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020, p.76.

²² Williams, 2012, p.1.

concept could be used in a successful way that could be of value to both the people of Myanmar but also the government itself.

By using concrete examples from the women's participative movement worldwide, recommendations will be developed which give practical advice on how to use the concept of participation to address potential human rights violations in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar both for women in a vulnerable position and for women involved in sex work. Using examples from various organisations and groups and applying the obtained information to a specific country's case has not been done by other studies before. The topic of addressing sex tourism in Myanmar has not been covered by other studies before and in general, it can be said that sex tourism in Myanmar has not been covered thoroughly by academic literature.

The recommendations in the last chapter of this study will be practical, relevant and applicable for both state and non-state actors.

1.5. Limitations

A potential limitation in this study is the use of examples of participation in self-organized group from other Asian countries, and applying the information to Myanmar. For instance, if there is data pointing to the fact that an NGO from India encountered challenges in relation to the practical application of participation with state actors, this does not necessarily mean that an NGO in Myanmar would encounter the same challenges.

Additionally, culture could be a potential limitation in this study. If for instance, women in Bangladesh are keen to participate in self-organized groups, this does not necessarily mean that women in Myanmar will necessarily feel the same. This can be linked to personal upbringing, religion, perception of women within a society or other cultural factors.

It is important to keep these probable limitations in mind and to acknowledge, that circumstances vary and that the outcomes of this study are not necessarily applicable to all situations, which does nevertheless not impact the importance of the paper.

1.6. Delimitations

As the people that are mostly working as sex workers are women, this study will focus on participation of women, leaving out men and children.²³ As data is limited and it would include numerous additional aspects, the study focuses on women that are above the age of 18 and have the Myanmar nationality. This means that the thesis will not cover specific issues in relation to ethnic minority or indigenous rights. The purpose of this study is also not to give information specifically on people that have been trafficked or smuggled across borders. All these topics can be relevant when speaking about sex tourism in Myanmar, but a limitation in scientific resources and data makes the inclusion of these themes not possible.

Sex tourism and sex work are not necessarily synonyms, as explained in the following literature review. Nevertheless, the author of this thesis limits the facts contained in this paper only to situations, in which sex tourism means a purchase of sex by a tourist from a sex worker. All other definitions of sex tourism would expand the topic considerably and the information could not be complete, due to a lack of academic resources on Myanmar.

Additionally, this study will not focus on participation in general but specifically on participation in self-organized groups. The author has chosen to write about this

²³ Hemingway, 2007, p.279.

specific part of participation, as it is the most convenient in the process of empowering participation.²⁴

1.7. Methodology

Qualitative analysis in the form of **literature review** will be used for this study. First the contextual situation in Myanmar will be analysed in regard to history, tourism, prostitution and sex tourism through scientific articles and other relevant documents. Then various examples of participation in self-organised groups (SOGs) will illustrate how participation of women can be used and which outcomes it can have. The study will illustrate how empowering participation can be used in relation to six different topics that are addressed by the activities of self-organised groups: (1) Sharing Knowledge and Education, (2) Economic Independence, (3) Housing, (4) Health Care, (5) Employment and (6) Collaboration and Advocacy. This enables the author to take the full spectrum of potential human rights violations in relation to sex tourism into account, including the ones that can happen while working as a sex worker but also the ones that are to be expected before the choice of engaging in sex work, for instance not having other options to receive an adequate salary, and this being the main reason why choosing to work as a sex worker. In a first step, the document will proceed with a short description of the SOGs in relation to their clients, vision and priorities. The next part of the chapter revolves around the six topics mentioned above. Every topic is illustrated with a description of practical activities by the SOGs.

The last chapter consists of recommendations for the State of Myanmar on how to make use of the concept of empowering participation to address sex tourism, practical examples of application and a conclusion.

²⁴ IIED, 1998, p.2.

Literature review is the most convenient method for this thesis for different reasons. First of all, an extensive amount of literature on participation and empowerment through NGOs and self-organized groups exists from various countries around the world. By using literature review, the documented experiences will be used and applied to a new case to create new knowledge and potentially prevent human rights violations.

Second of all, Myanmar is emerging from a politically challenged time where women's human rights were not considered a priority, which means that there is almost no existing recent literature on women's human rights, participation and sex work in Myanmar. The literature that is used in this document was created in countries that went through exactly the same issues and topics as Myanmar is currently going through. It is evident that using literature and examples from other Asian countries and SOGs is an adequate way to circumvent the lack of literature in former Burma.

Additionally, Myanmar is developing its tourism sector, which possibly leads to an increase in sex tourism as well.²⁵ By using literature from countries where sex tourism has already increased, it is possible to point out which challenges and issues could lie ahead in the future of the country and how to address them.

1.8. Organization of the Study

After the first introductory chapter, the second chapter of this thesis consists of a literature review on different aspects that are relevant for the content of the study. These aspects are sex tourism and the concepts of empowerment and

²⁵ Williams, 2012, p.1.

participation. The third chapter focuses on relevant information in Myanmar in relation to history, legal background, tourism, sex work and women's rights in the country.

The fourth chapter consists of examples of participation in SOGs from Asia. The chapter is divided into two separate categories: (1) description of NGOs and (2) topics, activities and outcomes.

The fifth and final chapter compares the outcomes of the fourth chapter with the developments in Myanmar and analyses how the concept of empowered participation through self-organising can be used in Myanmar. In the first part of the chapter practical recommendations will be given for State actors on how to support empowered participation in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar through self-organised groups. In a next part, the implementation of these recommendations in Myanmar will be illustrated with hypothetical examples. The thesis closes with a summary of findings and a conclusion.

After clarifying the nature and reasoning behind the thesis in this first chapter, the next chapter offers a literature review on the fundamental concepts and phenomenon that will be analysed in the document.

2. Chapter two: Review of literature

2.1. Sex Tourism in South East Asia

The following pages review the existing literature on the phenomenon of sex tourism in South East Asia. However, as this topic is multi-faceted and interlinked with various themes, the literature review mainly focuses on giving explanations on the "supply of sex work", which means that input is given in relation to why women are working as sex workers. This angle is also the one that is relevant in this

thesis.

Sex Tourism is a phenomenon that exists in many places around the world but has an especially high prevalence both in South East Asian and South American countries as for instance Thailand, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic and Cuba.²⁶²⁷ The stereotypical image, which is also widely spread in the media, is the perception of sex tourists being heterosexual, older European men.²⁸ However, scientific research in the fields of sociology, anthropology and women's studies has distinguished numerous dimension of the phenomenon of sex tourism. These additional dimensions, covered by research, can for instance be homosexual or female sex tourists.²⁹ Sex tourism has developed into a significant source of income in some countries, especially those that are currently developing and is seen as a "colossal economic boon for South East Asia" (Klein, 2012, p.1).³⁰

As mentioned, scientific literature offers different **definitions** of sex tourism. The most basic and at the same widespread definition is sex tourism being the act of traveling for the sole purpose of purchasing sex.³¹ Various scholars criticize this basic definition. Chris Ryan, professor of Tourism, explains "there is no single paradigm of sex tourism, but many". (Ryan, 2001, p.24) By this, he means that even if the term sex tourism is associated with red light districts, prostitution and sexual exploitation of women, the meaning of the term does not end there but also

²⁶ Oppermann, 1999, p.251.

²⁷ Williams, 2012, p.1.

²⁸ Williams, 2012, p.2.

²⁹ Williams, 2012, p.1.

³⁰ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p.23.

³¹ Williams, 2012, p.1

encompasses more indistinct situations.³² An example of an indistinct situation is a tourist that arrives in Yangon and meets a woman in a bar, whom he doesn't suspect to be a sex worker and he still ends up purchasing sexual services from her. Martin Oppermann does likewise not agree to define sex tourism as tourism with the main purpose of purchasing sex.³³ Oppermann is the author of a framework that adds five additional indicators beside monetary exchange, to the definition of sex tourism for instance purpose of travel. He argues that even if *purpose of travel* was for instance culture, tourists can still find themselves engaging in purchasing sexual services, which should also be covered by the term sex tourism.

A strong link can be made between the growth in tourism and an increase in sex work and sex tourism in some countries, but it is important to keep in mind that the root cause of the increase of sex work is found in the lack of employment and unequal societal structure, and not tourism itself.³⁴ If tourism would stop from one day to the other, it is very likely that sex work would increase, as unemployment and poverty would rise as well.³⁵ This means in concrete for this study, that it is of primordial importance to not focus on tourism to analyse sex tourism but instead to address the unequal structures that lie within the Myanmar society and more specifically to use, empowering participation in self-organised groups as a mean to address these unequal structures to potentially prevent human rights violations in relation to sex tourism.

³² Ryan, 2001, p.24.

³³ Oppermann, 1998, p.252.

³⁴ Boxill, 2002, p. 216.

³⁵ Idem.

The growth of the sex industry around the world has led to various debates on morality or immorality and to the accustomed association of **sex tourism and sex work**.³⁶ Sex work and sex tourism are two highly interlinked phenomena but they are not the same.³⁷ Sex work can for instance occur without the act of traveling from one country to another.³⁸ The author of this thesis focuses on sex tourism as the act of purchasing a sexual service abroad. It is not relevant if the payment is in actual money or in goods, the person who offers the sexual service is engaged in sex work.

When analysing the existing literature on sex tourism, it becomes apparent that most of the literature on sex tourism focuses on the exploitation of developing countries, an angle that this thesis analyses as well.³⁹ Sex tourism is intrinsically linked to geographical and political connections between developed and developing countries of the world economy, and is commonly seen as an unexpected consequence of mass tourism in developing countries.⁴⁰ Various scholars see sex tourism as a necessary phenomenon in relation to development of the country, which leads to its acceptance and enables abuse, which is continuously being encountered with impunity in South East Asia.⁴¹

As already highlighted on previous pages, another important factor, that needs to be taken into account when discussing the relevant aspects of sex tourism, is why women engage in sex work. Here a difference can be made between women from

³⁶ Klein, 2012, p. 7.

³⁷ Oppermann, 1998, p.252.

³⁸ Idem.

³⁹ Oppermann, 1998, p.253.

⁴⁰ Williams, 2012, p.1.

⁴¹ Hemingway, 2007, p.9.

developed and developing countries, that decide to work as sex workers.⁴² While women from developed countries in some cases choose sex work as a profession out of their personal free will, women from developing countries mostly use sex work as a mean for survival in an environment that is both socially and economically constructed in such a way, that it is not favourable towards women.⁴³

Research shows that various root causes lead to a growth in the supply for sex tourism for instance economical, social, political, institutional and ideological factors.⁴⁴ Poverty can be named as the principal cause of sex work, however this is not exclusive.⁴⁵ Additional factors can be the increasing consumerism and the pressure to “succeed” in a materialistic world.⁴⁶

The scholar Schöning-Kalendar (1989) explains that sex work can be a survival strategy for women in the developing world who lack, for instance, a sufficient income to sustain their children.⁴⁷ Cynthia Enloe (1989) explains that three conditions have to be in place to make sex tourism possible. The first one, and the one that is relevant in this context is that women from developing countries have to be “economically desperate enough to enter prostitution” (Enloe, 1989, p.36). Petterman (1998) argues that women agree to become a sex worker as a result of a family living in poverty or of displacement, which can be linked to urbanization.⁴⁸ Issues related to women working as sex workers in developing countries are both

⁴² Thanh-Dam, 1983, p.540.

⁴³ Idem.

⁴⁴ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p.24.

⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁶ Idem.

⁴⁷ Schöning-Kalendar, 1989, p.130.

⁴⁸ Petterman, 1998, p. 184.

linked to sexual freedom and oppression but also to social inequality sparked further by social change for instance urbanization or international labour mobility.⁴⁹ Another reason why women in developing countries chose to work as a sex worker is the income, which in many cases is higher than for other unskilled jobs.⁵⁰ In general, it is important to keep in mind that countries with a lack of education and employment opportunities for women, are likely to experience a rise in women, who engage in the sex industry.⁵¹

UN CEDAW describes sex tourism as a newly emerging form of sexual exploitation, which is “incompatible with the equal enjoyment of rights by women and with respect for their rights and dignity, (as it) puts women at special risk of violence and abuse” (CEDAW, 1994, p.27) When speaking about sex tourism and potential human rights violations as described above, it is important to also look at the human rights that can be infringed during the actual work of a sex worker. Various scholars mention the minimal chance of obtaining economic and social security for women working in sex work in South East Asia.⁵² Additionally, scholars acknowledge the high risk of sexually transmitted diseases for sex workers.⁵³ Various studies point to the fact that sex workers are often subjected to both physical and psychological violence, which in severe cases can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵⁴

Sex work is a marginal phenomenon, which does not necessarily relate to the

⁴⁹ Thanh-Dam, 1990, p.55.

⁵⁰ Thanh-Dam, 1983, p.540.

⁵¹ Boxill, 2002, p.216.

⁵² Idem.

⁵³ Swarbrooke, 1999, p.74.

⁵⁴ Farley & Barkan, 2008, pp.38-39.

quantity of services that are being purchased by sex tourists, but mainly to agencies on the border of legality that extract a large part of the income of the sex worker, while leaving the person behind in a vulnerable situation, unprotected from legislation.⁵⁵ The expansion of sex tourism however proves that the acceptance of purchasing sexual services is growing in developing countries to meet the demand of a diverse international market.⁵⁶ This development has been further supported by the increase of transport possibilities and the lack of supervision of developing governments of their tourist development.⁵⁷ Additionally, the expansion of sex tourism points out that development strategies have failed to improve the living standards of the poor in both rural and urban areas and to decrease the exploitation of women within the labour market.⁵⁸

When keeping all these various aspects of sex work and sex tourism in mind, the following human rights, included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, can potentially be violated: right to dignity, freedom from discrimination, right to life, prohibition of slavery, prohibition of torture, freedom of movement, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to social security, the right to free choice of work and the right to just and favourable conditions of work.⁵⁹

Sex tourism is a challenge for sustainable tourism, especially in South-East Asia but it is of great importance to acknowledge that attacking sex tourism will have severe consequences for the economies of countries that are depending on sex

⁵⁵ Thanh-Dam, 1983, p.549.

⁵⁶ Idem.

⁵⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸ Idem.

⁵⁹ UN General Assembly, 1948.

tourism and thus also for women engaged in sex tourism in the first place.⁶⁰ It is of crucial importance to ensure that actions are not counter-productive.⁶¹ NGOs, international organisations and sex workers organisations have, in various instances, mobilised against sex tourism.⁶² Cooperation and communication between the main stakeholders, for instance civil society, government and businesses can assist to address the core root causes of sexual exploitation in relation to sex tourism.⁶³

As this literature review shows, sex tourism is a broad topic that encloses various themes and issues. I don't agree with the definition of some scholars, that the term sex tourism does only apply if the tourist travels with the sole purpose of purchasing sexual services, as this definition would leave some aspects of sex tourism completely untreated. In the view of the author, sex work, the term, that summarizes the services purchased by a sex tourist, is not necessarily a human rights violation. However, the author clearly distinguishes between sex work in developed and developing countries. When working with sex workers in Europe, I encountered people that were satisfied with their job and chose to do it because they wanted to and not out of economic necessity. In these cases human rights were not infringed. However in Asia, I was never in contact with a person that had the same experience as some of the sex workers in Europe. Even if the women said they were not forced to work in sex work, they admitted that their choice to engage in sex work was only a consequence of economic necessity. If there is no alternative and engagement in sex work happens out of a pure struggle to survive,

⁶⁰ Swarbooke, John, 1999, p.75.

⁶¹ Idem.

⁶² Petterman, 1990, p.188.

⁶³ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p. 29.

human rights are being violated in the view of the author. I personally believe that women in South East Asia are either consciously or subconsciously forced to enter sex work, while it is crucial that every occupation should only be chosen on a voluntary basis to be in accordance with everyone's individual human rights.

The author wants to reinforce that an increase in tourism is in various cases linked to an increase in sex tourism, nevertheless it is of crucial importance to have a holistic view of the phenomenon and analyse structural differences and inequalities within societies to be able to understand the power relations within the phenomenon.

As the previous pages have analysed the phenomenon of sex tourism in South-East Asia, it is important to also focus on the literature on empowering participation on the following pages, as this concept will be used in this paper to address sex tourism in Myanmar.

2.2. Empowerment

The following pages of this literature review focus on existing literature on the concept of empowerment. It is important to understand this concept, as this paper focuses on empowering participation to address sex tourism in Myanmar.

The concepts of empowerment and participation are highly interlinked and can be seen both as processes and outcomes.⁶⁴ Participation can, without empowerment, evolve into an absolute symbolic exercise or even into an instrument to maintain harming power relations.⁶⁵ Empowerment can, without Participation, stay an

⁶⁴ Pettit, 2012, p.2.

⁶⁵ Pettit, 2012, p.2.

unfulfilled promise.⁶⁶ Because of the existence of this crucial link between both concepts, the existing literature on the topic of empowerment will be explored in the following pages of the document.

Definitions of empowerment vary notably between disciplines and contexts.⁶⁷ Most of the scholars writing on the topic agree that the term is vague, elastic and dynamic, which can be an asset and at the same time a challenge.⁶⁸ Empowerment is a “multidimensional and interdependent process, involving social, political, economic and legal changes that will enable people living in poverty and marginalisation to participate meaningfully in shaping their own futures.” (Pettit, p.2, 2012) The fact that the definition is vague, elastic and dynamic can lead to over- or underestimating the outcome of diverse development interventions.⁶⁹

Empowerment originated within the social movements and liberation struggles as for instance the feminist movement.⁷⁰ Since 1990, the concept has been widely accepted and through this mainstreaming taken on more individualist and neo-populist means for example in the work of development agencies.⁷¹

Zimmerman, one of the most cited scholars on the topic, explains that empowerment is a process, which can lead to people, organizations, and communities gaining mastery over issues of concern that are of great importance

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ East, 2000, p.317.

⁶⁸ Idem.

⁶⁹ Cornish, 2004.

⁷⁰ Pettit, 2012, p. 6.

⁷¹ Idem.

to them.⁷² The process can be seen as a construct that associates “individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to matters of policy and social change.”⁷³ Empowerment is the perception of the own competence and control, combined with an interest in the common good and awareness of connectedness with others.⁷⁴ Even if the concept is used mostly in the context of poverty reduction and development, everyone can be empowered, which makes it important to say that empowerment does not require stigmatizing associations as for instance powerlessness, helplessness or absence of alienation.

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An empowering process is a series of experiences, which allows people to gain a certain amount of control of their destiny and influence decisions that have an impact on their lives.⁷⁷ According to Zimmerman, one has to differ various types of empowerment: psychological empowerment, organizational empowerment and community empowerment. These types are different from each other but they are at the same time interrelated, for instance in the case of a woman being empowered on a psychological level while also being part of a community empowering process.⁷⁸

Psychological empowerment refers to the individual level of analysis.⁷⁹ A

⁷² Zimmerman, 1995, p.581.

⁷³ Zimmerman & Rapaport, 1988, p.726.

⁷⁴ Zimmerman & Rapaport, 1988, p.747.

⁷⁵ Rappaport, 1984, p.1.

⁷⁶ Pettit, 2012, p.2.

⁷⁷ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

⁷⁸ Zimmerman, 1995, p.582.

⁷⁹ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

practical example can be a woman that participates in a meeting of an organisation, shares her concerns about the difficulties related to unemployment. During the meeting other members share the same concerns. Psychological empowerment means in this case that the person realises on a psychological individual level that she is not alone with her issues, which can potentially result in mental strength and confidence. Psychological empowerment does not only mean self-perceptions of competence but prerequisites active engagement in one's community and understanding of the own social and political environment.⁸⁰

Organizational empowerment means having an impact on members' skills and providing them with the necessary support in order to influence social change on a community-based level.⁸¹ A practical example here is networking between similar organisations. One organisation has for example achieved a positive change in a local shelter for women that suffered from gender-based violence. Another organisation would like to do the same but the members are not sure about how to do this. Organizational empowerment could here for example mean, that a member of the first organisations meets up with members from the other organisation to introduce them to the different steps in the process, so that they are in the future able to do the action themselves.

Community empowerment means individuals coming together and working in an organised way to have a positive effect on the shared linkages of their collective lives.⁸² An example for community empowerment is people living in one community from different ethnic backgrounds, age and gender coming together and working

⁸⁰ Zimmerman, 1995, p.582.

⁸¹ Idem.

⁸² Idem.

on improving the educational system. This can, in the long run, lead to community empowerment as education can have various impacts on the lives within the community; unemployment, illiteracy and poverty might in the long-term decrease.

In a process every participating individual can be empowered. This means that if there is a mutual help group for abusers of alcohol, not only the participants of the group can be empowered but also for example the moderators or the social workers involved in the group.

As this document focuses on the empowerment of women through participation, it is important to explain what feminist theory states in relation to the topic. Feminist theory is broad and includes various schools of thought.⁸³ The theory and practice of feminism and empowerment have much in common.⁸⁴ The key principles of feminism can be summarized as being the following: (a) understanding the structure of patriarchy and its ways to maintain women's subservience (b) the link between oppression of women and sexism, racism and classism, (c) establishment of a link between personal problems and (d) empowerment and power relations as resourceful utensils for change.⁸⁵

In contrary to Zimmerman, feminist authors qualify the possibility of empowerment only on the personal level. Worell and Remer write that empowerment means (1) an individual process that assists women with the personal situation in life through learning flexible methods of problem solutions, development of interpersonal skills and life skills, or (2) encouraging women to seek an understanding of external

⁸³ Saulnier, 1996, p.343.

⁸⁴ East, 2000, p.317.

⁸⁵ Idem.

conditions, which can reduce their value and subordinate them.⁸⁶

When it comes to the question of **how empowerment takes place**, one can clearly see that the opinions differ in the existing literature. Some scholars focus for instance on communication as key determinant, while others state the crucial importance of systemic transformation.⁸⁷ The topics of self-representation and collectivity appear in different documents as the main ways of empowering.⁸⁸ Community and connection can be an important asset for women to gain autonomy, mastery and control over their environment.⁸⁹ Some practical methods of empowerment focus on enabling the individual person to gain access to certain resources, information or communities, so that the person is able to improve their own situation.⁹⁰ Empowerment can be the consequence of opportunities to develop and practice skills, working with others on a common goal, expanding the personal social support network or developing leader skills.⁹¹ This means in concrete, that there are many ways empowerment can take place. For this thesis it is important to keep in mind, that participation is one means to achieve empowerment of women and empowerment can be a means to achieve participation.

The term empowerment does not only focus on the process itself but the term also encloses outcomes.⁹² The consequences of empowering processes are being commonly referred to as **empowered outcomes**, which can also for instance be

⁸⁶ Worell & Remer, 1992, p.22.

⁸⁷ East, 2000, p.317.

⁸⁸ GAATW, 2007, p.8.

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰ Pettit, 2012, p.7

⁹¹ Zimmerman, 1995, p.584.

⁹² Zimmerman, 1995, p.581.

desired health outcomes.⁹³⁹⁴ In addition to its vague definition and the fact that empowerment is an open-ended construct that cannot easily be reduced to operational rules and indicators, it is important to be aware of the difficulty of measuring empowered outcomes.⁹⁵

On the psychological level, empowered outcomes can for instance be manifested on (1) the intrapersonal component: a change in how people think about themselves, (2) the interactional component: understanding people of the community and their related issues or (3) behavioural component: an adaption in actions taken to influence outcomes.⁹⁶

Various scholars point to the link between empowerment and education and especially one pedagogue, Paulo Freire, developed the concept of “empowerment education”, which is important to mention in this paper.⁹⁷ According to Freire, education should adapt its starting point “to start from the problems of the community, to use active learning methods, and to engage participants in determining their own needs and priorities” (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p.382). Freire developed his concept while he was working with farmers in Brazil in the 1950s.⁹⁸ In the view of the pedagogue, classical education is nothing else than “an act of depositing” (Freire, 2002, p.72) knowledge from the so-called expert teacher into the students’ heads.⁹⁹ Freire advocates to liberate and to empower the

⁹³ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

⁹⁴ Zimmerman, 1995, p.585.

⁹⁵ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

⁹⁶ Zimmerman, 1995, p.581.

⁹⁷ Mooney, p.2.

⁹⁸ Mooney, p.3.

⁹⁹ Freire, 2002, p.72.

students by making them aware of the world around them and giving them a space to criticize.¹⁰⁰ His model of empowerment education relates around three topics: (1) citizens should express their own knowledge and by this, shape their own educative process, (2) the communicative process between citizens leads to a consciousness about root causes of social issues, and (3) the programs built upon the empowerment education model lead to the creation of skills, confidence and opportunities for both individual and collective engagement.¹⁰¹ This concept is interesting for this paper as it centralizes participation and empowerment as a prerequisite for a successful educative process. This model teaches its participants to become aware of their own environment and to influence it by individual actions which can be a potential step into taking action against social issues for instance in poor communities.

In general, it is important to keep in mind that empowerment is a concept that is difficult to define because the methods of empowerment can vary and are not limited. Additionally, outcomes can't clearly be measured with indicators. I agree with Zimmerman on the point that empowerment can take place on the psychological, community and organizational level and that all of these can be interrelated.

Overall, I believe that there is no need to measure empowerment as it can happen consciously or unconsciously and both are valuable to the same extent. I believe that the concept of empowerment is of crucial importance when working with participation especially in relation to women's rights and sex tourism because, as stated by Pettit, participation without empowerment is not effective for both the

¹⁰⁰ Mooney, p.3.

¹⁰¹ Delp et al., 2005, p.273.

person and the community. The state can for instance implement participative activities that are not useful for the community and don't trigger empowerment, which makes the activities useless in the long term as they don't lead to persisting social change. I see empowerment as a concept to keep in mind and to use when critically reflecting on actions.

2.3 Participation

As this paper focuses on the use of the concept of empowering participation to address potential issues in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar, the following pages will explore the existing literature on participation.

To the same extent as empowerment, **defining** participation is a difficult task because it is conceptually vague and the term can have a different meaning for different people.^{102 103} In general it can be said that, participation mainly includes the people's self-involvement in their own development both on a personal and community level.¹⁰⁴ Participation means, in this study, the involvement of women in an organized activity without obtaining payment with the purpose to attain a common goal.¹⁰⁵

Various researches have shown that participation can be a crucial mechanism for psychological empowerment, as it offers to the involved person, the possibility to gain knowledge on for instance organizing, identification of gaps on a societal and

¹⁰² GAATW, 2007, p.34.

¹⁰³ IIED, 1998, p.2.

¹⁰⁴ GAATW, 2007, p.34.

¹⁰⁵ Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p.726.

political level and recognition of alternative strategies to reach a goal.¹⁰⁶ Participation should lead to opportunities for people's involvement in processes of knowledge and policy-creation.¹⁰⁷ Participation is one out of various means to achieve empowerment of women. In relation to this paper, this means that there can be other ways to achieve empowerment of women in Myanmar, but as will be explained on the following pages, empowering participation is especially valuable in this context.

A study by East (2000) describes which themes are central to women who are part of an organizing effort.¹⁰⁸ On the level of personal change processes the most significant themes are: *having a voice and being heard; taking control; relationship community and support*: commonality, responsibility for self and others, knowledge, someone who believes in the person.¹⁰⁹ On the level of individual and interpersonal change processes, the themes are: influencing the state legislative and policy; influencing administrative practices; changing stereotypes; educating the public on issues.¹¹⁰

It is important to keep in mind that participation should not be “done to someone” by trying to mechanically apply a method but is rather a process involving communication, action, analysis and change.¹¹¹ The concept of participation has been used with the goal to build local capacity and self-confidence but also to

¹⁰⁶ Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p.727.

¹⁰⁷ Wakeford & Singh, 2008, p.6.

¹⁰⁸ East, 2000, p.317.

¹⁰⁹ East, 2000, pp.317-319.

¹¹⁰ East, 2000, pp.319-323.

¹¹¹ IIED, 1998, p.1.

dissolve power and shift decision-making processes away from external bodies.¹¹² Instead of being imposed on the participant, the participant should lead the process himself without direct interference.

Participation can take **various forms**, as for instance (1) *Passive participation*: people participate because someone tells them what will happen (2) *Participation in Information Gathering*: people participate by answering a questionnaire (3) *Participation by consultation*: people from an external organization listen to issues and views of local people. The people from the external organization define the issues that will be discussed and propose the solutions. (4) *Participation for material incentives*: people participate because they have been promised a resource in return, for example money or food, (5) *Functional participation*: people participate by forming groups to work on prearranged aims related to the project or research. The contribution is often made after decisive choices have been made. These establishments can be reliant on external originators but can become autonomous. (6) *Interactive participation*: people participate in combined analysis, which leads to action plans and the creation of new local organisations or the consolidation of existing ones. Groups can take control over local decision making processes, which means that people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices. (7) *Self-Mobilisation*: people participate, independent of external organisations, by taking initiatives with the common aim to change existing structures and systems that may have an impact on their life or surrounding. It is possible that they create relationships with external stakeholders for resources or technical guidance, but they keep control about how the resources are used.¹¹³

¹¹² IIED, 1998, p.2.

¹¹³ IIED, 1998, p.3.

As these various forms of participation exist, it is of crucial importance to reflect on how the term participation will be used and interpreted.¹¹⁴ When looking at these different forms of participation it becomes apparent that not all of them support the objectives of sustainable development or are empowering.¹¹⁵ If for instance, an NGO says they are using participative methods because they ask their clients to answer a questionnaire (participation through information gathering) then this does not necessarily mean that this is an empowering way of participation because (1) the client did not decide himself on the topic or questions that are being addressed (2) the client might not see any outcome or result of the study he participated in, which means that there is no establishment of a common goal between the external organisation and the client, (3) the client might participate simply to do a favour to the people working in the NGO without being interested in the actual point of the research.

These different forms of participation can be put into practise through different means for instance organizing in general, self-organized groups, participation of women in governments, or participation in Civil Society organisations as for instance non-governmental organisations. These organisations, groups and institutions can also apply various methods of participation as for instance exchange through discussions, participatory action research, agro-ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology or rapid rural appraisal.¹¹⁶

Even if participation becomes widely accepted by various actors as an important concept in development, its effectiveness can be uncertain.¹¹⁷ Various tools and

¹¹⁴ Idem.

¹¹⁵ Idem.

¹¹⁶ IIED, 1998, p.1.

¹¹⁷ Patel & Mitlin, 2002, p.126.

methods of participation build on collaboration between professionals and the community.¹¹⁸ This collaboration can be problematic as external professionals entitle themselves the role of knowledge specialists.¹¹⁹ There is a crucial requisite for recognition that communities should be the “communicators and instigators of participatory development processes” (Patel & Mitlin, 2002, p.128). Different professionals believe that social change through participation can only be instigated by designing, managing and realizing of participation by the communities themselves.¹²⁰ If the external professionals are the agents of change the possibility to learn is being taken away of the community.¹²¹ Issues that are linked to this problematic can for instance be dependency on external actors, lack of ownership or “developments” that are not adequate for cultural reasons. Additionally, external actors can influence the validity of the outcome of participation by for instance just using the part of the gathered information that fits into their agenda.¹²² In some cases, organisers of participation did not take into account that already vulnerable groups “have been further marginalised by the way the participatory process was organised or analysed” (Wakeford & Singh, 2008, p.7).

One form of participation limits the difficulties raised above, which is self-mobilisation.¹²³ Self-mobilisation gives the people the possibility to define issues and topics that matter to themselves, and offers them the space to develop actions and solutions on their own, which can lead to empowerment. This is the reason

¹¹⁸ Patel & Mitlin, 2002, p.127.

¹¹⁹ Idem.

¹²⁰ Patel & Mitlin, 2002, p.128.

¹²¹ Idem.

¹²² Wakeford & Singh, 2008, p.7.

¹²³ IIED, 1998, p.2.

why the author has chosen to use this form of participation in the chapter of analysis. Self-mobilisation will be analysed and illustrated through participation in Self-Organised Groups in Asia.

Participation in self-organised groups will be explained on the following pages, but first it is important to point out why gender matters in relation to participation as this paper primarily focuses on participation of women.

Participation of women

Different studies and documents point out, that people with higher resources and power have a higher possibility of participation and of benefitting from a market directed development.¹²⁴ It is important to keep in mind in this context, that this means, that women in Myanmar, that do not have a high amount of resources and power are more likely to be left out of a participatory process.

The existence of unequal gender associations combined with a lack of secure rights to land and natural resources can lead to an exclusion of women from decision-making processes in many parts of the world.¹²⁵ Even if these unequal gender associations exist, women bear in many cases the core responsibility to provide the family for instance with food.¹²⁶ A growing lack over natural resources leads to a rise in competition, which also increases the vulnerability of marginalised groups as, for instance women.¹²⁷ Scholars point to the fact that in many cases women lack “access to land, credit, income, education and information relative to

¹²⁴ Kanji & Fei Tan, 2008, p.75.

¹²⁵ Idem.

¹²⁶ Idem.

¹²⁷ Kanji & Fei Tan, 2008, p.75.

men, while bearing heavier roles as carers, in the context of HIV and AIDS and often declining health and welfare provision” (Kanji & Fei Tan, 2008, p.75). “Women’s rights are critical if we are to achieve sustainable development. We cannot afford to view these struggles for rights as a luxury or of secondary importance in relation to other areas of contention” (Kanji & Fei Tan, 2008, p.75).

Self-organised groups, as will be explained on the following pages, can address these issues in relation to participation of women.

Participation in Self-Organized Groups

The term self-organized group refers to any group that consists of people that have direct experience with the issue they are working on.¹²⁸ This can for example be an organization for sex workers’ rights created by sex workers themselves.¹²⁹ Self-organised groups are one potential strategy for vulnerable or marginalized groups to change conditions related to work and life to manage to have an impact on discourses and to create new roles.¹³⁰ In the context of SOGs, participation can mean “genuine decision-making power, implementation of organisational goals, public representation, developing analysis, sharing information, or social participation in collective activity”. (GAATW, 2007, p.34) The SOGs themselves should define which aspects of participation are the most relevant to the women, which are members.¹³¹

Some external stakeholders have difficulties to accept self-organizing as a way to

¹²⁸ GAATW, 2007, p.6

¹²⁹ Idem.

¹³⁰ GAATW, 2007, p.13

¹³¹ GAATW, 2007, p.34.

empower. This is especially linked to the fact that SOGs are headed by, for example sex workers.¹³² Several barriers lie here in the possibility of empowerment through participation. Due to stigma the society in some cases does not want to accept that people involved in an SOG have the skills to lead an organization and achieve positive and resourceful outcomes.¹³³ Overcoming intrinsic challenges like these is one of the major processes, which let groups demonstrate power, resilience and determination.¹³⁴

Self-organized groups can lead both to individual and collective empowerment.¹³⁵ This happens through the recognition that experience is a source of knowledge and personal and professional strength.¹³⁶ Additionally, self-organized groups foster empowerment through the creation of new identities and social roles, positive self-assessments, provision of a learning opportunity and a potential change on the level of community relationships.¹³⁷ A woman that participates in a self-organised group can for instance realise that other women face the same issues as her, which can lead to a more positive view of herself than before.

Self-organised groups can for instance be involved in offering direct assistance for women in need. Some offer healthcare services and work on influencing their government on a policy level, additionally some focus on supporting the children of the members and raising public awareness.¹³⁸

¹³² GAATW, 2007, p.36.

¹³³ Idem.

¹³⁴ Idem.

¹³⁵ GAATW, 2007, p.16.

¹³⁶ GAATW, 2007, p.22.

¹³⁷ GAATW, 2007, pp.22-31.

¹³⁸ GAATW, 2007, p.38.

It is important to keep in mind that, different stakeholders can have differing ideas what resourceful participation actually means.¹³⁹ While an NGO can for instance see the simple attendance of clients during a meeting as participation, this might not be enough to qualify it as participative for a self-organized group. In the context of this paper, it is important to note, that it is of primordial importance that the women that participate in the self-organised group are the ones that should define what is participative, as they are the ones who identify the issues and topics they want to work with.

Various scholars mention a gap between the theory of empowerment and the participatory practise, which is caused among other factors mainly by **power relations**.¹⁴⁰ As power relations, which can drive inequality and exclusion, are not easily changed or challenged, participation risks in some cases to be “rendered tokenistic”.¹⁴¹ (Pettit, 2012, p.2)

In addition to academic documents on power relations, various frameworks address the topic as well. In general one has to distinguish visible, hidden and invisible power.¹⁴² Visible and hidden power relations are open and specifically address topics in relation to “having power over”.¹⁴³ Invisible power means beliefs of people in relation to expectations and the possibility to have a voice.¹⁴⁴ Pettit explains that these frameworks are more helpful than the theory in relation to

¹³⁹ GAATW, 2007, p.34

¹⁴⁰ Pettit, 2012, p.2.

¹⁴¹ Idem.

¹⁴² Vene Klasen & Valerie Miller, 2006.

¹⁴³ Pettit, 2012, p.5.

¹⁴⁴ Idem.

assess power relations and identifying strategies that will work right across all levels of the spectrum.¹⁴⁵ Examples of these frameworks are the power matrix by Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller or the powercube by John Gaventa. Both of these frameworks build on the three-dimensional notion of power between visible, hidden and invisible influences.¹⁴⁶ These frameworks are especially useful when it comes to power relations related to participation because they allow ways of supporting positive expressions of power.¹⁴⁷

This chapter has given an overview of the main theories and phenomenon's that will be used and described in this paper. In the following chapter, relevant information will be given about Myanmar.

3. Chapter three: Myanmar

3.1. *General Information*

“Myanmar, earlier known as Burma, is on the cusp of a transition – a process that has to pass through formidable challenges and whose outcome is still quite uncertain” (Ghoshal, 2013, p.117).

Myanmar is a state in South-East Asia and a direct neighbour to Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. The country, with a total of 676,578 sq. km, has a landscape that is characterized by large agricultural land and by forests, which

¹⁴⁵ Pettit, 2012, p.6

¹⁴⁶ Idem.

¹⁴⁷ Idem.

cover 47% of the surface.¹⁴⁸¹⁴⁹ The capital of Myanmar is Yangon also called Rangoon, while the administrative capital is Nay Pyi Taw.¹⁵⁰

Myanmar's modern history is characterized both by political and natural disaster.¹⁵¹ 50 years of military misrule have turned Myanmar, which used to be the richest, into the poorest country in South-East Asia with "an abysmal record in political, economic and social spheres" (Ghoshal, 2013, p.117).¹⁵²

During the 19th century, numerous ethnic Burmese and ethnic minority city-states or kingdoms existed in the country.¹⁵³ In a 62 year long process, Britain occupied the country and added it to its Indian Empire in 1886.¹⁵⁴ Burma stayed an Indian province until 1937, when it developed into a self-governing colony and became independent of the commonwealth in 1948.¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶ General Ne Win was the dominant force in the government from 1962 until 1988. At first, he was a military ruler and then he appointed himself as president before becoming a "political kingpin" (CIA, 2014) later on. Ne Win resigned in 1988 because of civil protest and demonstrations but within months, the military overtook power completely.¹⁵⁷ In

¹⁴⁸ CIA, 2014.

¹⁴⁹ OECD, 2013, p.3.

¹⁵⁰ Freedom House, 2011, p.9.

¹⁵¹ Klein, 2012, p.2.

¹⁵² Ghoshal, 2013, p.117.

¹⁵³ CIA, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Idem.

¹⁵⁵ Idem.

¹⁵⁶ Freedom House, 2010, p.9.

¹⁵⁷ CIA, 2014.

1990 elections took place in Myanmar with the result of the opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), winning the elections.¹⁵⁸ The military junta did not accept the vote and instead put the NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi under arrest and violently suppressed civil uprisings during several years.¹⁵⁹

In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Burma, which killed around 140.000 people and injured many more, leaving a large part of the population homeless.¹⁶⁰ Even though the cyclone had devastating consequences for the population of Myanmar, the military junta did not refrain from holding a constitutional referendum in 2010. Many members of the international community considered the referendum as not valid, as 75% of the seats were appointed to the Union Solidarity and Development Party. The parliament was convened in January 2011, former Prime Minister Thein Sein became president and members of the military became a crucial part of the national-level appointees, which was heavily criticized by international specialists.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the government has since then started to engage in a process of opening this isolated country.¹⁶² This process includes for instance the release of hundreds of political prisoners, a peace agreement with 10 out of 11 armed ethnic groups, the ratification of laws to ensure the protection of human rights and a reduction on sanctions of the freedoms of press, association and civil society¹⁶³. New elections will be held in 2015 and the political parties are preparing

¹⁵⁸ Idem.

¹⁵⁹ Idem.

¹⁶⁰ Idem.

¹⁶¹ Idem.

¹⁶² Idem.

¹⁶³ CIA, 2014.

their participation right now.¹⁶⁴

Myanmar's current transition to democracy includes various obstacles that are related to its historical past and present. The aftermath of the civil war is not concluded and hundreds of different ethnic groups inhabit remote areas of the country, where poverty and a humanitarian crisis are imminent.¹⁶⁵ The civil war has led to thousands of internally displaced people and even more refugees.¹⁶⁶ Myanmar is home to a narcotics industry, which includes some of the richest businessmen that are known in the drug trade.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, some political prisoners have not yet been released and clashes between the Burmese military and local insurgent groups continue to persist.¹⁶⁸ As this short summary of the historical milestones of Myanmar shows, the fulfilment of "all human rights for all" has been problematic in the past and moreover creates challenges for the future of the country.

The **population** of Myanmar counts around 60 million people and is growing steadily.¹⁶⁹ ¹⁷⁰ It is a young population, however it will start ageing soon.¹⁷¹ 68% of the population of Myanmar is Burman; 9% belong to the Shan ethnic group; 7 % belong to the Karen ethnic group and 4% belong to the Rakhine ethnic group and

¹⁶⁴ Idem.

¹⁶⁵ Ghoshal, 2013, p.125.

¹⁶⁶ Idem.

¹⁶⁷ Idem.

¹⁶⁸ Ghoshal, 2013, p.127.

¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.3.

¹⁷⁰ CIA, 2014.

¹⁷¹ OECD, 2013, p.6.

others as Myanmar's population includes over 100 ethnic groups.¹⁷² ¹⁷³ The official language is Burmese, while the minorities have their own languages as for instance Shan and Karen.¹⁷⁴ 89% of the inhabitants of Myanmar are Buddhist, while the other 11% are mainly Christian and Muslim.

Close to one quarter of the population live in **poverty** and the increase in economic growth of the recent years has not diminished that number.¹⁷⁵ Poverty is a crucial obstacle in Myanmar, in order to acquire an adequate standard of living, as it reduces access to public services, for instance education, healthcare and also key infrastructures such as electricity and safe drinking water.¹⁷⁶ Experts point out that 84% of the population living in poverty can be found in rural areas.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, access to public services and goods is higher in urban than in rural areas of Myanmar.¹⁷⁸ Especially the bordering regions as for instance to China and Thailand have a higher per capita expenditure than the rest of the country, as workers from Myanmar find higher wages in China or Thailand.¹⁷⁹

Most of Myanmar's population profits from formal **education** and has basic reading, writing and mathematic skills.¹⁸⁰ 95,8 of Myanmar's population between

¹⁷² Ministry for Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.3.

¹⁷³ CIA, 2014.

¹⁷⁴ Idem.

¹⁷⁵ OECD, 2013, p.15.

¹⁷⁶ Idem.

¹⁷⁷ ADB, 2012, p.7.

¹⁷⁸ OECD, 2013, p.15.

¹⁷⁹ Idem.

¹⁸⁰ OECD, 2013, p.14.

15-24 years are literate.¹⁸¹ Myanmar's education has generally improved during the last 20 years, however an existing high prevalence of school dropouts from primary schools and a low enrolment rate at the secondary school level needs to be addressed in order to tackle problems related to unemployment and poverty in the country.¹⁸² The current population cannot provide the job market with the set of skills that are required.¹⁸³ Additionally, in relation to the potential economical progress of the future, it is essential that the country improves its educational system.¹⁸⁴

The HIV rate in Myanmar is high with 0,6% of the 15-49 year old population being infected in 2009.¹⁸⁵ In 2009, 18.000 people died of HIV/Aids in Myanmar.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the malaria incidence rate, which relates to the new infections per year, is higher in Myanmar than in its neighbouring countries.¹⁸⁷

“Fertile land, abundant natural resources, a rich cultural heritage, a young labour force and a prime geographic location represent enormous **development** opportunities for Myanmar” (OECD, 2013, p.4). The current challenge of the country is instigating rapid economic growth, while at the same time ensuring sustainability and sharing of the benefits with the current population.¹⁸⁸ Economic growth has been low in the last years in Myanmar compared to its level of income,

¹⁸¹ ADB, 2012, p.8.

¹⁸² OECD, 2013, p.14.

¹⁸³ Idem.

¹⁸⁴ Idem.

¹⁸⁵ ADB, 2012, p.8.

¹⁸⁶ CIA, 2014.

¹⁸⁷ ADB, 2012, p.8.

¹⁸⁸ OECD, 2013, p.4.

but the OECD medium-term growth forecast predicts a rise during the next years, due to the potential structural developments and an increase in tourism.¹⁸⁹

Myanmar has a high prevalence of poverty, however private consumption has been the main driving force for economic growth.¹⁹⁰ To strengthen private consumption, improvements in living standards and increase in income are of crucial importance.¹⁹¹ For steady growth that remunerates the whole population, various job-creating sectors have to be expanded.¹⁹² Agriculture is today's main provider of jobs in Myanmar, while it will still be economically important, its employment rate is going to shrink mainly because of mechanization.¹⁹³ Another crucial issue for the country in relation to agriculture is landlessness.¹⁹⁴ A high percentage of the households that work in agriculture don't possess any land, which can lead to the fact that the families, in case of selling of the land, can lose everything and due to a lack of public goods and services not fulfil their most basic rights as for instance the right to food or the right to housing.¹⁹⁵ The development of both manufacturing and services sectors through investment is of crucial importance, in order to create new jobs and raise the incomes of the current population.¹⁹⁶ Specialists predict, that the business sector will potentially be a driving force in the development of the country.¹⁹⁷ The OECD has found that

¹⁸⁹ OECD, 2013, p.5.

¹⁹⁰ Idem.

¹⁹¹ Idem.

¹⁹² Idem.

¹⁹³ Idem.

¹⁹⁴ OECD, 2013, p.15.

¹⁹⁵ Idem.

¹⁹⁶ OECD, 2013, p.5.

¹⁹⁷ OECD, 2013, p.12.

Myanmar's human capital, which consists of employment, health and education outcomes, is better than prior anticipated.¹⁹⁸

In comparison to Myanmar's strong natural capital stock and positive human capital outlook, the country has a relatively poor social capital.¹⁹⁹ For instance social support and civic engagement is perceived as low while corruption is perceived as high.²⁰⁰ "The lack of institutional and social capital is the key constraint to Myanmar's development (...)" (OECD, 2013, p. 8). The main factor that decides if Myanmar will be successful in creating secure and sustainable growth is the creation of institutional and social capital to strengthen the rule of law, to maintain sustainable development and to create an enabling atmosphere for the expanding private sector in Myanmar.²⁰¹

It is of crucial importance, especially for a country as ethnically diverse as Myanmar, that the development aspirations of the country are inclusive and offer equal opportunities for the population.²⁰² Issues in relation to extreme poverty and unequal distribution of public goods need to be addressed by reform and an on-going political transition, with the aim of minimizing ethnic tension and regional disparity.²⁰³ It will be a challenge for the government to trigger stable development while at the same time respecting and maintaining the cultural diversity within this area.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ OECD, 2013, p.7.

¹⁹⁹ Idem.

²⁰⁰ Idem.

²⁰¹ OECD, 2013, p.8.

²⁰² OECD, 2013, p.14.

²⁰³ Idem.

²⁰⁴ OECD, 2013, p.17.

In some parts of Myanmar, the lack of **rule of law** has a negative impact on the provision of public goods, as for instance security and justice.²⁰⁵ The lack of rule of law can be linked to the historical past of the country, where the government and other specific individuals maintained the power, in various cases with damaging consequences for the lives of its inhabitants.²⁰⁶ During the recent past of Myanmar, the government has tried to strengthen the rule of law by reform, for instance the passing of various new laws. Whether or not the power of the rule of law can be augmented will depend on the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers.²⁰⁷ The new government, which came into power in 2011, has also tried to strengthen the principles of rule of law: voice, accountability and transparency.²⁰⁸ Developments in the past of Myanmar have led to a substantial lack of trust in the government, and it is of crucial importance that the government improves the situation by applying the means of transparency, cooperation and accepting and implementing policies.²⁰⁹ The need for freedom of expression for the press and civil society is of crucial importance for the future of the country.²¹⁰

As the last pages, that include general information about Myanmar, highlight there are still many challenges for human rights in the country. It is a positive step that the government seeks to open up and develop its economy, but the author wants to reinforce, the importance of sustainability and equal opportunities in this development.

²⁰⁵ OECD, 2013, p.10.

²⁰⁶ Idem.

²⁰⁷ Idem.

²⁰⁸ Idem.

²⁰⁹ OECD, 2013, p.17.

²¹⁰ Idem.

After this general description of relevant issues in the context of Myanmar it is important to review information on the position of women in the society of Myanmar.

3.2. Women in Myanmar

As already stated before, there is no extensive amount of literature available on women or women's human rights in Myanmar, however reviewing the limited existing information is still of importance in order to understand the context.

The most recent **constitution** of Myanmar, published in 2008, points out that, women should enjoy the same rights, as approved by law, and Article 348 additionally adds that the Union should not discriminate based on sexual grounds.²¹¹ ²¹² However Article 352 of the Constitution supplements these articles by stating: "...nothing in this Section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only" (Constitution of Myanmar, 2008, p.150). In the opinion of the author, article 352 takes all the power from those articles that try to ensure non-discrimination of women. Article 352, can be misused in various cases, as it does not specify which positions are suitable only for men and clearly subordinates women to men in Myanmar.

Theravada **Buddhism**, which is a common religion in Myanmar, can be a potential justification to explain why women are seen as subordinate to men.²¹³ According to the hierarchy, which is important in the beliefs of this orthodox school of Buddhism,

²¹¹ Constitution of the Republic of Myanmar, 2008, p.150.

²¹² Constitution of the Republic of Myanmar, 2008, p.149.

²¹³ Kara, 2009, p.174.

“women are considered less than men” (Klein, 2012, p.6). Female gender, poverty and disease are seen as an indicator for undesirable deeds and impact your karma negatively.²¹⁴

During the modern history of the country, women were subjected to various human rights violations. The military was for instance accused of systematically using rape and forced marriage against women from ethnic minorities.²¹⁵ The process of reconciliation for these crimes is not yet concluded.²¹⁶ Before the civil war, foreigners mainly handled business affairs.²¹⁷ In the post-war era this changed as business opportunities opened up for the local population especially for women, who did not run commonly run businesses before.²¹⁸ As a consequence, it is perfectly ordinary in Myanmar for women to run businesses such as shops, which is not common in neighbouring countries.²¹⁹ Additionally, the post-war era enabled educational possibilities for women in Myanmar.²²⁰ In former times, women used to be excluded from political processes, however this is not the case anymore, and women are present in the current political sphere.²²¹

According to the OECD, Myanmar’s human capital in relation to employment, health and education outcomes of women are similar and in some cases even

²¹⁴ Idem.

²¹⁵ Freedom House, 2011, p.9.

²¹⁶ Idem.

²¹⁷ Mya Sein, 1958, p.2.

²¹⁸ Idem.

²¹⁹ Idem.

²²⁰ Idem.

²²¹ Euro-Burma Office, p.14.

better than those of men.²²² This means that men and women have the same opportunities in education.

What can be concluded from the information on the last pages is that even though Myanmar has opened up and is offering new opportunities for women, for instance in business and politics, it does not change their role in society, where they are still perceived as subordinate to men. The perceived subordination can have a major impact on women who are in a vulnerable situation, especially on stigmatization of sex workers. This leads to the next subchapter, which offers information on sex tourism and sex work in Myanmar.

3.3. Sex Work in Myanmar

It is a given, that due to the limited amount of information on women's human rights in Myanmar, there is very little literature on sex tourism and sex work in Myanmar.

According to the law of 1949, soliciting in public, forcing a woman into prostitution or keeping a brothel is **illegal** in Myanmar.²²³ The most relevant articles are Article 1 and 2 of section 5:

“Section 5. Art (1) Any person who knowingly lives, wholly or in part, on the earnings of prostitution shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not less than one year and not more than three years and may also be liable to a fine” (The State Peace and Development Council, 1998, p.1).

“Section 5. Art (2) Where a person is proved to be living with, or to be habitually in

²²² OECD, 2013, p.7.

²²³ The State Peace and Development Council, 1998, p.1.

the company of, a prostitute, or is proved to have exercised control, direction or influence over the movements of a prostitute in such a manner as to show that he is aiding, abetting or compelling her prostitution with any other person or generally, it shall be presumed until the contrary is proved, that he is knowingly living on the earnings of prostitution” (The State Peace and Development Council, 1998, p.1).

Various members of the international community have heavily criticized the prohibition of prostitution in Myanmar, because it leads to abuse of women by pimps, law enforcement officers and also by the clients.²²⁴ While women can face prison charges and fines, perpetrators of abuse remain unpunished in most cases.²²⁵ It is important to note here that these articles also lead to further stigmatization and discrimination, as it is illegal to be in company of a prostitute in general.

This description by a young sex worker, gives an example on how the articles can be misused by clients and law enforcement: “I was forced to have sex with 12 men in an empty bus. This went on for the whole night. There were policemen around but if I cried for help, I would be the only one arrested. Only half of the men used condoms. In the morning I got 1000 kyat (1000 kyat = 1 USD)” (Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p. 196).

By making prostitution illegal, lawmakers try to eradicate the phenomenon, which has proven to be impossible elsewhere in the world throughout history. In contrary, experts state that the sex trade and prostitution is rapidly expanding in Myanmar,

²²⁴ Klein, 2012, p.

²²⁵ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.199.

especially in Yangon, which is the main tourism hub.²²⁶ The increase in prostitution can be explained by the changing political situation combined with the economic decline of the last decades, which has led to severe consequences for the most vulnerable groups in the society, especially women. The events have led to the end of long-term planning and instead shifted focus onto short-term goals, which explains why many women resort to sex work.²²⁷ Women in Myanmar started to develop survival strategies to fulfil their own and their families' daily needs and as sex work pays off more than other unskilled employment possibilities, the number of sex workers in Myanmar is increasing.

On the surface it appears that illegality works and that sex work is declining, but many operators simply resort to ingenious methods to hide their activities by, for instance, opening brothels that are for instance disguised as tailors or beautician training schools.²²⁸ Additionally, the illegality of prostitution makes it difficult to identify forced prostitution and sexual exploitation and assist women that need help.

Talikowski and Gillieatt conducted one major study in 2005 in Yangon, which aids to identify a **key profile** of female sex workers in Myanmar. They undertook a qualitative study in 2002, with the purpose to analyse the social and demographic features that lead to the high prevalence of HIV but also of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).²²⁹ Talikowski and Gillieatt interviewed 27 key stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental organisations and

²²⁶ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.193.

²²⁷ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.199.

²²⁸ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.195.

²²⁹ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.193.

additionally interviewed 25 women that were currently engaged in sex work.²³⁰

According to their findings, the mean age of sex workers in Yangon lies around 24 years and their level of education was very low, which means either incomplete or no primary education.²³¹ Most of the interviewed sex workers were single.²³² One third of the female sex workers state that they have been previously imprisoned for 15 days up to 3 years for offences in relation to sex work.²³³ Some sex workers report that they paid bribes to government officials, which freed them from imprisonment while at the same time forcing them to return into sex work.²³⁴

It is impossible to estimate **how many** sex workers are currently active in Myanmar. The Myanmar National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2011-2015 states that there is a range of 40.000-80.000 sex workers in Myanmar.²³⁵ Only one fifth of the sex workers work independently, without a connection to pimps or brokers.²³⁶ The sex workers commonly perceive the pimps as brutal and ruthless.²³⁷

The sex workers have a varying number of **clients** per night, while it is important to note that women from lower socio-economic groups have more clients, which

²³⁰ Idem.

²³¹ Idem.

²³² Idem.

²³³ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.195.

²³⁴ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

²³⁵ Myanmar National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2011-2015, p.3.

²³⁶ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

²³⁷ Idem.

might also be linked to fact that they have lower price rates for their services.²³⁸ The numbers of clients range from 15 clients to 30 clients a day, which is very high in comparison to the average number of clients for sex workers in Europe.²³⁹ The age of the clients vary considerably, but some of them are as young as 12 and are “introduced” to sex work by family members.²⁴⁰ This is an important aspect in relation to the potential development of sex tourism in Myanmar, as the government needs to ensure that awareness-raising for sex workers and their rights happens on all social and familial level and does not only address women but also families. Some sex workers report about incidents of gang rape, which means rape by a multitude of perpetrators.²⁴¹ Statistics estimate that 880.000 men purchased services by a sex worker in 2007.²⁴²

As in many other societies, sex work is a taboo in Myanmar, but Theravada Buddhism has a positive impact on the perseverance of sex workers because, in the view of many, making a merit, for instance by sending money home to their families, counterbalances the demerit of sex work itself.²⁴³

Several NGOs and UN agencies described the condom use by sex workers as low, as 40-50% of the women engaged in sex work used them regularly in 2002.²⁴⁴ Potential reasons for the low use can be (1) the stigma that is related to purchasing

²³⁸ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

²³⁹ Idem.

²⁴⁰ Idem.

²⁴¹ Idem.

²⁴² Myanmar National Strategic Plan on HIV and Aids, 2011-2015, p.6.

²⁴³ Mensendiek, 1997, p.165.

²⁴⁴ Talikoski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

condoms, but also (2) the high prices of condoms in general.²⁴⁵ Additionally, economic need could be a reason for accepting a client who refuses to make use of a condom.²⁴⁶ Research shows that many sex workers refuse to carry condoms in their purse, as it is being used as evidence against them for prosecution.²⁴⁷

As a consequence of the low condom use in general, **HIV** has a very high prevalence in Myanmar and experts state that the incidence rate continues to rise.²⁴⁸ In 2001, between 180.000 and 400.000 people were infected with the virus, but the real extent of the infection rate is unknown, as the majority of sex workers have never been tested for HIV or any other sexually transmitted diseases.²⁴⁹ ²⁵⁰ The marginalized position of women within sex work has significantly limited their access to health facilities.²⁵¹ Many sex workers do not have access to any kind of health care, and in some instances the government has been accused of killing HIV positive women.²⁵² It is important that the government takes action to address the HIV epidemic without perceiving the sex workers as responsible for its outbreak, as this might lead, to even more discrimination, stigmatization and a reinforcement of patriarchy.²⁵³ “Instead gender-sensitive programmes designed by and implemented for female sex workers need to be based on acceptance and tolerance of sex work in order to make a real positive change” (Talikowski &

²⁴⁵ Idem.

²⁴⁶ Idem.

²⁴⁷ Talikoski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.198.

²⁴⁸ Talikoski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.193.

²⁴⁹ Idem.

²⁵⁰ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.198.

²⁵¹ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.200.

²⁵² Klein, 2012, p.11.

²⁵³ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.201.

Gilleatt, 2005, p.201).

In the past, insufficient economic conditions have led to a high prevalence of **human trafficking** for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Myanmar.²⁵⁴ This thesis, does not analyse the phenomenon of human trafficking in detail, however it is still important to note the potential impact that tourism can have on the prevalence of human trafficking in Myanmar. The US Trafficking in Persons report (US TIP report) describes Myanmar, among others, as a source country for women that will be involved in sex trafficking in other countries.²⁵⁵ Even if human trafficking and sexual exploitation are not necessarily interlinked, the interventions against human trafficking can, in some cases, be linked to their work against sexual exploitation. The US TIP report also describes that the government did not make significant efforts to address internal human trafficking, within the borders of Myanmar.²⁵⁶ A significant number of perpetrators, including government officials, have not been held accountable, which can be explained by the high level of corruption within the country.²⁵⁷ The report also mentions that the government runs 5 centres for women and children in need, not only for victims of trafficking.²⁵⁸ These centres are not mentioned in any other reports related to women and women's human rights in Myanmar, and it is important to note that 5 centres offers assistance to a limited number of women and not to all the cases. Additionally, the report does not speak of the quality of these centres.

²⁵⁴ CIA, 2014.

²⁵⁵ United States Department of State, 2014, p.114.

²⁵⁶ United States Department of State, 2014, p.115.

²⁵⁷ US Department of State, 2014, p.115.

²⁵⁸ US Department of State, 2014, p.116.

“The government did not make any discernible efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labour inside Burma during the reporting period” (US Department of State, 2014, p.117). This is probably the most useful statement in the US TiP report, in relation to the topic of this paper. It can be concluded that the government publishes policies and documents regarding human trafficking, in relation to border trafficking but failed to address sexual exploitation within the own borders. It is important that the State of Myanmar addresses this deficiency, especially with regards to the opening of the borders and the development of the tourism sector, which can lead to an increase in sex tourism. In the view of the author, with the opening up of the country, and the development of the tourism sector, the prevalence of human trafficking might go down, while the rate of sex workers within the borders of Myanmar could rise. If the government continually fails to address sexual exploitation within its own borders, this will lead to severe human rights violations.

Various scholars explain that it is likely that an increase in tourism can potentially lead to an increase in **sex tourism**, but as Myanmar is currently developing its tourism sector, no information on sex tourism has been published so far, even though it is likely that the phenomenon already exists. The US TIP report notes for instance that “a small number of foreign paedophiles have attempted to enter Burma with the intent to exploit Burmese children” (US Department of State, 2014, p.114). This statement supports the assumption that sexual exploitation by foreigners already exists in the country.

International experts assess that it is of great importance that the government of Myanmar reviews the current anti-prostitution laws, and replaces them with policies, which assists the vulnerable groups of female sex workers, and that they

work on non-discriminatory programs for sex workers in order to address potential human rights violations in relation to sex tourism.^{259 260}

3.4. *Tourism in Myanmar*

In order to understand the topic of the paper, it is of great importance to analyse the tourism sector of Myanmar. The following pages describe the development of tourism in Myanmar, especially in relation to sustainable tourism and women's human rights.

South East Asia is the fastest growing region for tourism in the world.²⁶¹ In 2011, for instance, South East Asia had an increase of 15 million tourists in comparison to the year before.²⁶² In 2012, for the first time in the history of the country, over 1 million tourists travelled to Myanmar, which made the country see the highest growth in tourism in South East Asia with an increase of 52%.²⁶³ The Tourism Master Plan states that, Myanmar aims to have 3,01 million tourists visiting by 2015 and 7,48 million by 2020 representing an immense growth in foreign visitors.^{264 265}

Myanmar's geographic location is an advantage for the development of the sector, as it is in the centre of a dynamic region, with borders towards India, Bangladesh,

²⁵⁹ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.199.

²⁶⁰ Idem.

²⁶¹ UNWTO, 2013, p.7.

²⁶² Idem.

²⁶³ Idem.

²⁶⁴ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.iii.

²⁶⁵ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012.

China, Laos and Thailand.²⁶⁶ Additionally, it can attract tourists with its jungles, mountains, remote beaches and an extensive cultural heritage.²⁶⁷ A report by the McKinsey Institute predicts, that tourism could possibly add 14,1 billion US dollars to the GDP of Myanmar by 2030, which is a strong increase compared to 0,6 billion US dollars in 2010.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, tourism can lead to the development of 2 million new jobs from 2010 until 2030.²⁶⁹

To enable the potential development of the tourism sector it is of crucial importance that the government (1) liberalizes transportation within the country and also visa requirements; (2) supports the creation of infrastructure for air, water, road or rail; (3) supports the expansion of facilities for tourists such as hotels and (4) develops a marketing strategy to attract tourists.²⁷⁰

Myanmar has a large, young, well-trained and low cost **labour force**, while at the same time it maintains a higher labour productivity as other South East Asian countries.²⁷¹ This basis can be an asset for the service industries especially the potential development of the tourism industry.²⁷² It is important to keep in mind that already now, half of the people that currently work in the Myanmar tourism sector are women. Hand in hand with an expansion of the tourism sector comes an increase in the job opportunities for women, for instance in new hotels or

²⁶⁶ OECD, 2013, p.4.

²⁶⁷ ADB, 2012, p.18.

²⁶⁸ McKinsey Institute, 2013, p.35.

²⁶⁹ Idem.

²⁷⁰ McKinsey Institute, 2013, p.46.

²⁷¹ OECD, 2013, pp.3-4.

²⁷² OECD, 2013, p.4.

restaurants.²⁷³

As the Myanmar National League for Democracy points out in a statement, “tourism could enhance the economic life of the peoples of the host country, by creating new jobs, bringing in hard currency and raising the standard of living, it could also have **negative consequences**, if (...) social values are not approached with sufficient sensitivity” (NLD, 2011, pp.1-2). It can be said that tourism activities are especially, in South East Asia, in most cases related to the existence of unequal and exploitative relationships, which leads to the consequence that the poorest and most vulnerable suffer the most from the negative impacts of the tourism sector.²⁷⁴ Thailand is a good example because the development of their tourism sector led to a fast development of the urban areas, while it impoverished the rural areas and put farmers and indigenous people into economic shortcoming.²⁷⁵

To address the potential negative effects of the tourism development, the government of Myanmar has published various laws and policies during the last years. Two documents are especially relevant in this context: (1) the tourism master plan 2013-2020 and (2) the Myanmar Responsible Tourism policy. In the context of this paper, it is important to keep some aspects of these documents in mind, when speaking about addressing sex tourism through empowering participation.

In the **Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020**, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism

²⁷³ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.ii.

²⁷⁴ Hemingway, 2007, p.3.

²⁷⁵ Hemingway, 2007, p.5.

highlights that it “has placed considerable emphasis on developing and managing tourism in sustainable and responsible ways, in line with the Government’s reform strategies and economic liberalization” (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, foreword). The Master Plan has the intent of maximizing “tourism’s contribution to national employment and income generation while ensuring the social and economic benefits of tourism are distributed equally” (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, foreword). The master plan states that gender equity is included in all policies and development planning related to tourism, which means that women and men should have equal access to jobs, training and resources, that are created as a consequence of the newly emerging tourism sector.²⁷⁶

A part of raising awareness for sustainable tourism, as stated in the Master Plan, is the development of do’s and don’ts for international visitors.²⁷⁷ The do’s and don’ts are available online and consist of 30 pictures that are illustrating a code of conduct for tourists in Myanmar.²⁷⁸ In this document, one of the pictures focuses on sex work. The title of the picture is: “Practice safe sex” and under the illustration is written, “Prostitution is illegal in Myanmar” (See Appendix: A). First of all, this is a discriminating and stigmatizing picture, as it infers that AIDS is a disease that only concerns sex workers. It is important to remind tourists of the national laws, but as the experience from neighbouring countries shows, this is by far not enough to address sex tourism and prevent its negative impacts. In Thailand, for instance, prostitution is illegal too and still in “1999, 3,920,000 men came to Thailand for sex”.²⁷⁹ This indicates the need to develop and implement other mechanisms to

²⁷⁶ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.ii.

²⁷⁷ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.11.

²⁷⁸ Available at: <http://www.dosanddonsfortourists.com/>

²⁷⁹ Green, 2001.

address the negative impacts of sex work and sex tourism.

The tourism master plan also makes a few specific declarations related to women and the development of the tourism sector. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is responsible for awareness raising and preventing of all forms of abuse and exploitation of women.²⁸⁰ The key objectives of the master plan state that the Government of Myanmar ensures that it will develop safeguards to ensure the needs of women.²⁸¹

The second relevant document, in the context of this paper, is the Myanmar **Sustainable Tourism Policy**. The policy includes the objective of creating “awareness and prevention of sexual exploitation of men, women and children by establishing groups at local level to detect and prevent abuse” (Ministry for Hotels and Tourism, 2012, p.19). The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Myanmar Police Force are mentioned as main focal points.²⁸² Additionally the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is responsible for awareness raising in collaboration with the Myanmar Tourism Federation, Hotel and accommodation providers, Tour Operators, Development Agencies, INGO’s, NGO’s, Ministry of Immigration and Population, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information and State/Regional governments.²⁸³

It is however noteworthy, that on the homepages of the actors mentioned in the Tourism Master Plan and Sustainable Tourism Policy, such as for instance the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism or the Government of Myanmar, no additional

²⁸⁰ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.11.

²⁸¹ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013. p.28.

²⁸² Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013. p.19.

²⁸³ Idem.

information on women's human rights, sex tourism or sex tourism can be found. In none of the documents the words "prostitution", "sex work" or "sex tourism" is mentioned, which is peculiar, concerning the fact that various other issues, that can be harmful for the community, have been mentioned.

Both documents are well researched and it seems that the international community and the government of Myanmar uses the knowledge from the development of tourism from neighbouring countries, in order to address possible negative impacts for the tourism development in Myanmar. This knowledge is also used in relation to women's rights, but still a lack of explicitly addressing sex work and sex tourism is noteworthy. The government needs to overcome the "taboo-isation" of sex work, as prostitution is a reality in the country and women's human rights violations might increase if the phenomenon of sex tourism rises.

The implementation of the documents is however the crucial part in the process, and if the government does not ensure with further documents and policies that women's human rights are respected and does not address sex work or sex tourism, it is unlikely that the tourism master plan and the sustainable tourism policy fulfil their primary purpose of maximizing the benefits of tourism development for the community.

3.5. Participation in Myanmar

As we are analysing the use of the concept of participation in order to address sex tourism in Myanmar, it is important to determine if and how the State of Myanmar has implemented the concept until now.

As described on the previous pages, Myanmar has a poor social capital and the

population perceives social support and civic engagement as low.^{284 285} In order to increase participation to strengthen the principles of rule of law in Myanmar, the government has for instance implemented fora for people to express their voice (participation) on policies or laws.^{286 287} Experts write that voice and accountability can potentially also be strengthened by a redistribution of power, for instance by the creation of sub-central government units.²⁸⁸ To implement policies and execute plans that favour voice and accountability, it is of crucial importance to develop effective and functioning strategies for local institutions and to employ well-trained local officials.²⁸⁹ “In addition, the extent to which powers are devolved, including revenue-raising powers, is an important determinant of the impact of decentralisation on participation, voice and accountability” (OECD, 2013, p.10).

As it is the government’s goal to develop tourism in Myanmar in a sustainable way, the concept of participation is also incorporated in the tourism master plan. The plan stresses that consultation and participation with relevant stakeholders will be ensured, to support gender inclusiveness and empower the integration of the views of stakeholders in the decision-making.²⁹⁰

The tourism master plan foresees the publication of a **community involvement policy**, which will also pursue the goal of promoting the participation of women.²⁹¹

²⁸⁴ OECD, 2013, p.7.

²⁸⁵ Idem.

²⁸⁶ OECD, 2013, p.10.

²⁸⁷ Idem.

²⁸⁸ Idem.

²⁸⁹ Idem.

²⁹⁰ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.ii.

²⁹¹ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.32.

A budget of 1.2 million US dollars has been assigned for the development of this policy.²⁹² The community involvement policy states that a high level of local community participation might not be possible, due to a lack of experience of the community in decision-making processes. This is the reason why the community involvement policy foresees a medium level of participation in the early stage of implementation.²⁹³

The plan also mentions gender responsibility and how important non-discrimination is, in the context of tourism development.²⁹⁴ Additionally, the plan points to the importance of decent work, which means the availability of employment that focuses on the conditions of freedom, equity, human security and dignity.²⁹⁵ The role of women is specifically mentioned, with focus on managing and creating socio-economic opportunities for families, enhancing employment opportunities for women and the provision of educational programs such as artisan or craft training.²⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that the only time prostitution is mentioned is in order to point out that it is illegal within the country but not in order to address any potential issues in relation to the phenomenon.²⁹⁷

Through the community involvement policy, the government of Myanmar shows that they are aware of the importance of the concept of participation, as part of developing the tourism sector. However, they don't define which form of participation they plan to implement. As has been stated in the literature review not

²⁹² Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p.64.

²⁹³ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012, pp. 10-11

²⁹⁴ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012 (2), p.15.

²⁹⁵ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012 (2), p. 16.

²⁹⁶ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012 (2), p. 24.

²⁹⁷ Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2012 (2), p. 28.

all the forms of participation lead to empowered outcomes. In addition, it is questionable to which extent the community involvement policy and the concept of community participation will be put into practice. In the view of the author it is very likely, that the concept of participation will be used, as expressed in the literature review on participation, as a symbolic exercise or maybe even as an instrument to maintain harming power relations as posited by Pettit (2012).²⁹⁸ Pettit points to the fact that is important that States give people, that live in poverty the possibility to participate in a meaningful way to shape their own future.²⁹⁹ As the policies by the Myanmar government don't specify, which form of participation should be used, this could for instance mean that the State will implement participation that is merely passive for instance by letting the population answer to a questionnaire, which does not necessarily revolve around issues that are important to the general public and does not lead to any positive changes for the society.

Especially in relation to women's rights, the policy would need additional input, as for instance sex work or sex tourism, which are phenomenon that are directly affected by tourism, are not directly mentioned. This thesis gives insights on how the government of Myanmar could further use the concept of empowered participation, to address potential human rights violations that are linked to sex tourism.

As this chapter has shown, the fulfilment of human rights of the population of Myanmar still faces many challenges. Especially the development of the tourism sector can have positive but also negative impacts for society. The various policies and plans on tourism development shows that the government of Myanmar, but

²⁹⁸ Pettit, 2012, p.2.

²⁹⁹ Idem.

also the international community, have learned from the development of tourism in other countries and that they use this knowledge to address potential negative impacts.

There is a crucial need for research on women and women's human rights in Myanmar. I find it particularly interesting that the government developed a community involvement policy, which shows that they are really planning on making use of the concept. One can only hope that they really put the community involvement policy into practice, and start addressing issues in relation to gender, especially in relation to sex work and sex tourism.

After the methodological background in the first chapter, the second chapter of this thesis offers information on sex tourism, empowerment and participation from the academic literature. This third chapter analyses the current situation in Myanmar from various angles. In the next part, the author will make use of examples of self-organised groups from Asia, to illustrate how the government can make use of the concept of empowered participation to address sex tourism in Myanmar.

4. Chapter four: Examples of Participation

The following chapter gives practical examples on how the concept of empowered participation has been used by self-organised groups (SOGs) in Asia. A self-organised group in this study is considered, as any group that consists of people that have direct experience with the issue they are working on.³⁰⁰ As has been stated in the related literature review, self-organised groups is one potential strategy for vulnerable or marginalized groups to change conditions related to work and life, as well as having an impact on discourses, while at the same time creating

³⁰⁰ GAATW, 2007, p.6

new roles.³⁰¹

The organisation of the chapter is as follows. In the first part of the chapter, five SOGs are briefly described in relation to the population they work with, their vision and their priorities, as the activities by these SOGs will be the practical examples in the following part of the chapter.

In a next step, the author has identified 6 topics that the SOGs address through their activities, which are: (1) sharing knowledge and exchange, (2) economic independence, (3) housing, (4) health care, (5) employment and (6) collaboration and advocacy. These topics revolve around the activities that the SOGs have established themselves, which is of crucial importance to achieve change through empowering participation. As will be described in the second step of the chapter, the women of the SOGs decided to work on these issues as they felt that these were the concerns that preoccupied them primarily and that urgently needed to be addressed in order to fulfil women's human rights in their communities.

As will be demonstrated on the following pages, the SOGs use empowered participation to address these 6 different topics through their activities, which can be relevant both (1) for women that are in a vulnerable position and could potentially end up in an exploitative situation, for instance forced sex work and (2) for women that are already working in sex work, and want to address issues in relation to their work. It is important that the activities address both women in a vulnerable position that risk to engage in sex work, and women that are engaged in sex work, as they can both experience human rights violations through sex tourism. As has been stated before, women who are in a vulnerable position can

³⁰¹ GAATW, 2007, p.13

be consciously or unconsciously forced to engage in sex work for instance because of a lack of other employment opportunities or because of the need for a higher salary than other unskilled jobs can offer. Women that already engage in sex work can also experience human rights violations for instance in relation to their health or in relation to discrimination.

The 6 topics that the example-SOGs are focusing on with their activities are also of crucial importance in Myanmar. A link between the activities of Asian SOGs in general will be made for every topic specifically. However, in general it can be said that, as close to one quarter of the population lives in poverty, many women live in vulnerable situations and might resolve to sex work to gain a living, which is not their own choice but merely based on economic necessity and a lack of alternatives.³⁰² Additionally, scientific research has proven that the rights of sex workers in Myanmar are not respected for instance in relation to their health and discrimination, which urgently needs to be addressed.³⁰³ ³⁰⁴ These are the two main issues that SOGs could address through activities in Myanmar.

Each one of these 6 topics will be briefly described and put into context, while the SOGs, described in the first part of the chapter, will give practical insights on what the activities could look like and why these activities are being considered as empowering participation. After the examples of activities related to the different topics, the author provides a short general summary of empowered outcomes.

The SOGs, which are used as an example here, work on a variety of topics, while

³⁰² OECD, 2013, p.15.

³⁰³ Talikoski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

³⁰⁴ Talikowski & Gilleatt, 2005, p.201

having developed diverse instruments and methods. This variety is one of the selection criteria, as it allows the author to describe the full potential that SOGs can have. Another factor that is decisive for the choice of the SOGs is that international scholars, who determine their activities as successful, cover them. All the SOGs that are described here were established and take place in Asia, which is important because cultural aspects need to be taken into account when speaking about self-organising. Additionally, it was of great importance, that the SOGs have translated their material into English, and have been covered by scientific research to ensure the value of their work. It is important to keep in mind that there are many other potentially relevant SOGs, which work on additional topics and with other instruments and methods. The vast amount of literature on the examples used here is important, in order to be able to identify their impact, resources and outcomes. It would have been really interesting to include an example of an SOG that is in the beginning of their process, but unfortunately the lack of literature made this impossible.

4.1. Description of the Self-organised Groups

Before proceeding to the activities of the SOGs in relation to the 6 different topics, it is important to describe the five SOGs in order to understand their vision and the context they work in.

4.1.1. Mahila Milan

Mahila Milan, Hindi for “Women Together”, is an Indian network, created by self-organised, poor women collectives that work on housing, credit and saving

activities.³⁰⁵ Mahila Milan focuses on providing women with a space to take over decision-making roles as well as developing a variety of strategies to improve the livelihood of their communities.³⁰⁶

Situation

Mahila Milan was created in 1986 out of a resistance movement of women in Mumbai that organised themselves to prevent the demolition of their homes on the pavements.³⁰⁷

Mahila Milan is strongly linked to two other organisations, SPARC and NSDF. SPARC stands for “Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres” and is an Indian NGO that, since its existence, focuses on issues that have been identified by the communities of the poor itself.³⁰⁸ Instead of doing the classic “service delivery”, they assist the communities to identify, develop and instigate the services themselves. NSDF, the National Slum Dwellers Federation, is a federation that organises slum leaders who want to be involved in decision-making and policy development.³⁰⁹

Mahila Milan works with urban, poor women, especially pavement dwellers.³¹⁰ In the 1980s, when Mahila Milan was founded, India went through a phase of urbanization, which led to large pavement settlements in the cities.³¹¹ Pavement

³⁰⁵ SPARC, Mahila Milan.

³⁰⁶ Idem.

³⁰⁷ Idem.

³⁰⁸ SPARC (2), p.1.

³⁰⁹ Idem.

³¹⁰ Sparc (2), p.2.

³¹¹ Idem.

dwellers are the most vulnerable people within the Indian society.³¹² As Mahila Milan has developed into a large organisation, it is not possible to determine how many women are in total involved in this SOG.

Priorities

Mahila Milan's primary focus is (1) the recognition of the role of women in communities and (2) building up credibility of their collectives within communities.³¹³ Through training and activities, the members try to establish and strengthen a process that helps slum dwelling women to increase their livelihood situation, to participate on a local and city level, while at the same time having the possibility of being involved in discussions related to their livelihoods and needs.³¹⁴ How the women participate and decide which topics and activities will be addressed in the next part of the chapter.

4.1.2. Self-Employed Women's Association

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a trade union in India, which works with poor self-employed women workers, who earn a salary through their work or small business.³¹⁵ As these women are employed in the unorganised sector, they are not engaged in regular salaried employment with social benefits, such as, for instance health care.³¹⁶ SEWA's main goal is to achieve full employment for these women, which constitute 94% of the female labour market in

³¹² Idem.

³¹³ SPARC (2), p.7.

³¹⁴ Idem.

³¹⁵ SEWA, 2009.

³¹⁶ Idem.

India.³¹⁷

Situation

In the beginning the activities of SEWA mainly revolved around training and welfare activities, but after the women conducted a study, they discovered that there were many women in an exploitative situation that were not included in unionisation or government legislation and policies.³¹⁸ In 1972, women that were already part of the Textile Labour Association developed SEWA as a trade union for self-employed women that work in the unorganised sector.³¹⁹ Since 1972, SEWA's acceptance in India, as well as its number members, constantly grew.

The union accepts self-employed women from all over India to become a member.³²⁰ Members of the union elect the representatives of SEWA in a ratio of 1 representative per 100 union members.³²¹ The union also has an elected trade committee of 15 to 50 members, which meet every month to discuss issues in relation to trade.³²² Every three years, the Trade committee elects an Executive Committee and a president.³²³

The members of SEWA are workers from the unorganised sector, which means that they do not have a fixed employee-employer relationship, but instead rely on

³¹⁷ Idem.

³¹⁸ Idem.

³¹⁹ Idem.

³²⁰ Idem.

³²¹ Idem.

³²² Idem.

³²³ Idem.

their own labour in order to survive.³²⁴ SEWA explains that their clients are in general poor, illiterate and vulnerable and in addition rarely have any properties or operational capital.³²⁵ One can distinguish between four types of self-employed women: (1) small business women, for instance fruit and fish vendors, (2) home-based workers, for instance garment workers, potters or weavers, (3) manual labourers and service providers, for instance agricultural labourers or construction workers and (4) producers and service deliverers who work and invest to carry out their business, for instance cooking and vending or gum collectors.³²⁶

In 2008, SEWA had 966.139 members all over India, of which 1/3 were manual labourers and service providers.³²⁷ While until 1994 most of the members came from urban areas, nowadays 60% resides in rural areas.³²⁸

Priorities

SEWA's priority is the full employment of women, which is also linked to rights at work, occupational health and safety, right to food, right to social security and income security.³²⁹

4.1.3. Jagori

Jagori, which means, "awaken women" in Hindi, is an Indian self-organised collective of women that focuses on informing, inspiring and empowering women in

³²⁴ Idem.

³²⁵ Idem.

³²⁶ Idem.

³²⁷ Idem.

³²⁸ Idem.

³²⁹ Idem.

innovative ways, since 1984.³³⁰ Jagori's headquarter is a centre for women which focuses on training, documenting and communicating.³³¹

Situation

In 1984, Jagori started as a collective with the goal of spreading feminist consciousness to rural areas. The group has developed various projects to educate women in a self-organised way. The members of Jagori are women that are in a vulnerable situation, for instance unemployment or poverty. Jagori offers collective support and activities to address various issues that can be important in women's lives.³³²

Priorities

Jagori wants to achieve gender equality in relation to social and economical factors that have an impact on women's lives.³³³

4.1.4. Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) is a self-organised group that represents 65.000 sex workers in India.³³⁴ The Committee is active in enhancing a process of social and political change, to establish an environment that respects and strengthens the rights of sex workers.³³⁵

³³⁰ Jagori, 2013, p.1.

³³¹ Bharati, 2008, p.1.

³³² Idem.

³³³ Idem.

³³⁴ Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (1).

³³⁵ Idem.

Situation

DMSC started as a vertical HIV intervention program in 1992, with the purpose of reducing the appearance of HIV in Sonagachi, a red light district in Kolkata.³³⁶ The project trained peers from within the community, in order to share their knowledge with the sex workers of Sonagachi, for instance in relation to safe sex.³³⁷ The peers felt that the initial project did not address the full spectrum of issues that can be related to sex work and decided that it is important to empower the community members to address additional issues.³³⁸ In 1995, DMSC, as it exists now, was created. DMSC is set up and run by sex workers and their children, with the intent of creating solidarity and collective strength among sex workers.³³⁹

Priorities

The concept of DMSC is based on three R's: (1) Respect: create a respectful environment for sex workers in India, (2) Reliance: rely on the sex workers to run the programme and (3) Recognition: recognition of their professionalism and agency.

4.1.5. Action for Reach-Out

Sex workers in Hong Kong formed Action for Reach-Out (AFRO) in 1993.³⁴⁰ Their

³³⁶ Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (2).

³³⁷ Idem.

³³⁸ Idem.

³³⁹ Idem.

³⁴⁰ GAATW, 2007, p.48.

work focuses on improving the self-representation of sex-workers and to giving necessary assistance to women working in the sex industry.³⁴¹

Situation

The clients of AFRO are women, men and transgender who are working as sex workers in Hong Kong.³⁴²

Priorities

AFRO's main goal is the formation of a support network for sex workers in Hong Kong.³⁴³ AFRO works for the acceptance of sex workers rights, especially in relation to fair treatment by law, freedom of coercion and violence, safeguard of personal health, dignity, equality and non-discrimination.³⁴⁴

After this short description of the SOGs, the following part of the chapter gives insights on 6 different topics that are addressed by the activities of the SOGs and illustrates how empowerment and participation take place in these examples.

4.2. Topics and Activities

4.2.1. Sharing Knowledge and Education

Sharing knowledge and education is a relevant topic when trying to address issues in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar. As has been seen in the literature review, the population between 15-24 years have a high literacy of 95,8%, however school

³⁴¹ GAATW, 2007, p.48.

³⁴² Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.2.

³⁴³ GAATW, 2007, p.48.

³⁴⁴ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.3.

dropouts are high and need to be addressed to be able to reduce unemployment and poverty within the country, as these issues can lead to a rise in sex work.^{345 346}
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One of the most important aspects of a self-organised group is its social character and educational character. A self-organised group gives its participants space to share their issues, hopes and experiences and learn through these activities. A well-established self-organised group can be a fundamental support network for its women as it sustains an environment of trust, empathy and understanding. To use the full potential of this social environment the self-organised groups have developed different activities.

Mahila Milan offers regular exchange meetings, which take place in different communities within Mumbai.³⁴⁸ In the beginning, the women met 1,5 hours per month to discuss various issues.³⁴⁹ The number of meetings increased since then and the women themselves define how often they want to meet.³⁵⁰ During these meetings the women have the possibility to speak about their experiences and give each other for instance tips on saving money, applying for jobs and discussing issues that they want to address in further actions.³⁵¹ Peers, which are women that are living in the communities themselves, lead these exchanges and not

³⁴⁵ ADB, 2012, p.8.

³⁴⁶ OECD, 2013, p.14.

³⁴⁷ Boxill, 2002, p.216.

³⁴⁸ Ki Birmani, 1991, p.5.

³⁴⁹ Idem.

³⁵⁰ Idem.

³⁵¹ SPARC (2), p.4.

professional social workers.³⁵² Mahila Milan identified that sharing and discussing with peers leads to a more effective learning, as the women can identify with the women that speak to them and build up trust more easily.³⁵³ The exchanges started in Bombay and then expanded to other Indian cities.³⁵⁴ Nowadays, as other SOGs considered the activity as useful, these exchanges take place on other continents in Latin America and South Africa.³⁵⁵

The meetings can focus on specific issues but also on discussing problems that one single person faces.³⁵⁶ What makes the exchange meetings additionally effective is that Mahila Milan has the unspoken rule that, women who receive assistance will then, after the process is over, assist other women in return.³⁵⁷ In the beginning, some of the women were uncomfortable with this position, but through the support of their community they grew into the role and learned to be self-confident.³⁵⁸ In the first phase of the exchange meetings, the women preferred to assist women that they knew from their own community but after some time they decided to share their expertise with others from for instance other cities.³⁵⁹ The founders of Mahila Milan explain that it was a great success for them to see how the women developed with the new participative role they had taken, how their sensitivity towards different topics developed and how they developed a strong

³⁵² Ki Birmani, 1991, p.5.

³⁵³ SPARC (2), p.4.

³⁵⁴ Ki Birmani, 1991, p.5.

³⁵⁵ Idem.

³⁵⁶ Idem.

³⁵⁷ Idem.

³⁵⁸ Idem.

³⁵⁹ Idem.

knowledge in the field of their interest.³⁶⁰ The women are enthusiastic to discuss their own problems and processes, because they see that the exchange can help them to think about new solutions, while at the same time members of the community can use their experiences.³⁶¹ Often the women, after having been at the exchange meetings of Mahila Milan would go back to their community and share their new knowledge with their neighbours.³⁶² This made it possible, that the community exchange stimulates the need for next generations of volunteers for the group, who try out the already developed products and potentially refine them.³⁶³

The self-organised group **SEWA** offers an academy, which they also call an “our members’ university”.³⁶⁴ The women themselves run the academy and they decide which topics they want to focus on in the curriculum. During the last years, various trainings have been held by peers for instance in relation to work skills, literacy or information on research.³⁶⁵ 20.000 women participated in the academy in 2006.³⁶⁶

Jagori runs a resource centre that also offers space for the women to have study circles on, for the women relevant topics, of which 11 currently exist.³⁶⁷ Additionally, the self-organised group holds regular meetings.³⁶⁸ During these meetings, which are led by peers, the women have the possibility to discuss issues

³⁶⁰ Idem.

³⁶¹ Idem.

³⁶² Idem.

³⁶³ IIED (2), p.6.

³⁶⁴ Idem.

³⁶⁵ Idem.

³⁶⁶ Idem.

³⁶⁷ Jagori, 2012, p.13.

³⁶⁸ Idem.

that preoccupy them but also to obtain the newest information on government decisions or new policies.³⁶⁹ In 2012, various meetings were held especially in relation to sexual harassment in public places.³⁷⁰ The engagement within the communities has resulted in strong women's collectives, which are in most cases lead by one key person.³⁷¹

DMSC has established local problem-solving committees.³⁷² The local committees are in charge to solve any problems in relation to sex workers. The representatives of the local committees meet once a week in the central committee meetings to discuss issues. The representatives of the committee are those women that have developed into experts in problem solving and encounter wide respect within the society.

The self-organised group **AFRO** offers peer-led meetings and workshops that revolve around topics that are of great importance to their members for instance sexual health, stress management and mental health.³⁷³ The sex workers can share their experiences while at the same time offering each other mutual support.³⁷⁴ The women have established a photography section, which has been running for some years, where sex workers learn basic photography skills from other sex workers and exhibit every year at different spots throughout Hong Kong.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Jagori, 2012, p.13.

³⁷⁰ Jagori, 2012, p.22.

³⁷¹ Jagori, 2012, p.12.

³⁷² Cornish, 2004, p.39.

³⁷³ Idem.

³⁷⁴ Idem.

³⁷⁵ Idem.

As these examples show, an important asset of SOGs is the possibility of the members to learn through sharing and discussing issues that are relevant for them. The participative activities lead to psychological empowerment for different reasons. First of all, through discussions the women can realize that they share the same concerns and issues, which potentially leads to a feeling of identification with others and thus to higher mental strength and confidence for the members.³⁷⁶ This understanding can address the root causes of vulnerability as it influences the social factors of vulnerability and can have an impact on for instance their resilience, which means how they psychologically recover from difficult situations or crisis.³⁷⁷ The activities of the SOGs in relation to sharing knowledge and education are additionally empowering because the members identify flexible methods of solutions to issues, which they can apply.³⁷⁸ Another important aspect of these participative activities are that the members can improve their interpersonal skills and their empathy, which can be useful in many other situations in life for instance when applying for a job.³⁷⁹ As has been seen in the literature review, community and connection are essential aspects for the women to gain mastery and control over their environment, which these activities offer.³⁸⁰ The activities can lead to women gaining mastery over issues of concern that are of great importance to them, which is empowering according to the scholar Zimmerman.³⁸¹ What I find particularly interesting especially in relation to

³⁷⁶ Zimmerman, 1995, p.582.

³⁷⁷ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p.24.

³⁷⁸ Worell & Remer, 1992, p.22.

³⁷⁹ Idem.

³⁸⁰ GAATW, 2007, p.8

³⁸¹ Zimmerman, 1995, p.581.

empowerment is how, for instance the women of Mahila Milan started to grow into new leadership roles, which can be very useful in other situations in their lives.

What is additionally important, is that all the activities have in common that the women are the ones that decide on the topics they want to discuss on and that there is no external actors for instance social workers coming in to lead the discussions as this would influence the outcomes.³⁸² This also reflects the theory of empowering education by Paulo Freire, which has been mentioned in the literature review, and states that education needs to focus on a starting point “from the problems of the community, use active learning methods, and to engage participants in determining their own needs and priorities” (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p.382) This can additionally lead to the women learning to identify and address issues that preoccupy them, while reflecting on factors as for instance politics or economy.

4.2.2. Economic Independence

In developing countries, economic dependence is an important topic as it keeps poor people in a downwards-spinning spiral of poverty, which can, as described in the literature review, lead to women entering into sex work.³⁸³ In the experience of the SOGs, described in this paper, the poor population has to seek for credit on a daily basis and due to lack of resources, it forces them in many cases to enter into an exploitative situation, which can for instance be debt bondage.³⁸⁴

³⁸² IIED, 1998, p.1.

³⁸³ Enloe, 198, p.36.

³⁸⁴ SPARC (2), p.4.

As described in the literature review, various scholars explain that social and economic security is, in general very difficult to obtain for women in a vulnerable situation in South-East Asia.³⁸⁵ As 25% of the population of Myanmar live in poverty, most of which live in rural areas, it is likely that daily credits are used by the population of Myanmar as well, which leads to further vulnerability and thus needs to be addressed.³⁸⁶ Especially for women that are already engaged in sex work in Myanmar economic independence is of great importance. As Talikowski and Gillieatt report in their article, some of the Myanmar sex workers reported that they had to pay bribes to prevent imprisonment, which forced them to return into sex work and stopped them from quitting this activity to pay off their debt.³⁸⁷

To encounter this development, some SOGs have developed ways to address this personal economic instability in forms of saving schemes and credit schemes. **Mahila Milan** decided during an exchange meeting, that it would be a great asset for them to save money on a collective basis.³⁸⁸ One of the members of Mahila Milan explains: “We started saving because, earlier we did not know how to save money. Whatever was left, we would earn, give to children, earn and splurge, eat it away” (SPARC (5), p.1).

Together, they designed a crisis credit scheme, which focuses both on short and long term monetary needs.³⁸⁹ Every settlement of pavement dwellers identified one woman to be responsible for 10 up to 15 households and to visit the women for all

³⁸⁵ GAATW, 2007, p.34.

³⁸⁶ OECD, 2013, p.15.

³⁸⁷ Talikowski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.196.

³⁸⁸ Ki Birmani, 1991, p.6-10.

³⁸⁹ SPARC (2), p.5.

monetary transactions.³⁹⁰ These chosen representatives are part of a committee, which focuses on loan distributions.³⁹¹ The women that engage in the monetary scheme save 1-2 rupees per day with the monetary scheme.³⁹² The women of Mahila Milan created a fund and split the money into different categories: (1) money for emergencies, (2) money for loans and (4) money to pay for other communal benefits.³⁹³

(1) Money for emergencies: One of the most important assets of the money scheme is that money could be given out when needed, as the management of the money was completely controlled by the women of the community themselves.³⁹⁴ If any of the women had monetary issues, she could access the money she needs and repay it back to the fund on a later date.³⁹⁵ This gives the women the possibility to address the issue of accumulating debt, which leads in various cases into an exploitative situation. The last statistics from 2006 show that hundreds of thousands of poor people now have access to emergency loans.³⁹⁶

(2) Money for loans: One of the biggest concerns of Mahila Milan is receiving approval for loans. Once the fund had grown into being a safe source of money, the women started applying for additional loans at banks or other financial institutions by using the loan repayment records of the community.³⁹⁷ One of the

³⁹⁰ SPARC (2), p.5.

³⁹¹ Idem.

³⁹² Idem.

³⁹³ Idem.

³⁹⁴ Idem.

³⁹⁵ SPARC (4), p.17.

³⁹⁶ IEED (2), p.6.

³⁹⁷ SPARC (2), p.5.t

women explains: "... we could not save money, we did not have any bank accounts (...). When we went to Bank X, they asked us for a guarantee, after all this, SPARC took a guarantee and they opened 15-20 accounts in our name. Why? For the house, nobody takes a guarantee for the footpath people. They said – these people live on the footpath, they will be here today, there tomorrow. That is why, if we have money, we can show it to the government and they will know that even we have money. We are not beggars, that is why, to show that strength, we began with 50 rupees, which we saved daily" (SPARC (5), p.1). The last published statistics showed that over 25.000 people are currently making use of this scheme.³⁹⁸

(3) Money to pay for other communal benefits: In addition, the women also saved up to be ready to work on other activities that would benefit the living standards of the community for instance they build new sanitation and toilet facilities.³⁹⁹

Not only Mahila Milan has developed a monetary saving scheme but **SEWA** also addresses the issue. In 1974 they decided to open a bank, which is fully managed by the women themselves.⁴⁰⁰ Self-employed women, who are shareholders, own SEWA Bank.⁴⁰¹ The members elect a Board of women workers that publish policies in relation to the bank.⁴⁰² The Bank was established with 4000 members, each one of them contributing 4.000 rupees.⁴⁰³ This number of members had

³⁹⁸ IIED (2), p.7.

³⁹⁹ SPARC (2), p.6.

⁴⁰⁰ Idem.

⁴⁰¹ Idem.

⁴⁰² Idem.

⁴⁰³ Idem.

doubled in 2009.⁴⁰⁴ The bank has different schemes to promote active capital to its members for instance a women's farmers credit scheme and a scheme for women that develop their business.⁴⁰⁵

As the described activities show, working in a collective manner on economic independence through SOGs is resourceful and can lead to psychological empowerment. The examples show that especially the collective engagement for the good of the group and not primarily for the good of the individual is of great importance in SOGs. First of all, the women organise themselves and identify together, which can be the best way to save money. They can identify that they share the same issues, for instance a lack of knowledge on how to save money and develop solutions together. Additionally, some of the women took up new roles and leadership positions within the activity, which can lead to mental strength and confidence. Especially in the case of Mahila Milan the women needed to reflect on other issues to decide on what they want to spend their money to improve the whole community's livelihood, which can be qualified as empowerment on the interactional level as the women reflect on community related issues as described by Zimmerman.⁴⁰⁶ The work on economic independence enables women to analyse for instance the economic and political factors that influence their dependence, which can be useful in various instances in their lives.

4.2.3. Housing

For many of the SOGs one of the major concerns is the homelessness and the low living standard of their clients, which they try to address in their work. As Petterman

⁴⁰⁴ Idem.

⁴⁰⁵ Idem.

⁴⁰⁶ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

argues, many women decide to become sex workers as a result of displacement, which can be linked to urbanization.⁴⁰⁷ In Myanmar, landlessness is an important issue, as many families, that work for instance in agriculture, lose everything at once when the superior sells the land they work on.⁴⁰⁸ Especially, when putting this into the context of the current tourism development in Myanmar, it becomes apparent that this is an important issue for the future of the country as various reports mention already now forced eviction of Myanmar citizen.⁴⁰⁹

SOGs have developed activities to address issues related to housing for instance the women of **Mahila Milan** have developed a settlement questionnaire that allows them to gather information on the households and create an information base.⁴¹⁰ One of the crucial elements of this questionnaire is that the women are aware what the information will be used for, which is (1) internal problem solving and (2) negotiations with the State, for the improvement of the situation.⁴¹¹ The housing settlement statistics were used to talk to external agencies and visualise for them how important it is to build houses and give the people the opportunity to have a stable home.⁴¹² The women of Mahila Milan entered into a process with the community members and they shared knowledge on how to get land, how to build a house and how to keep the building costs down.⁴¹³ They then focused on elements in a house that are important to optimally use the resources that are

⁴⁰⁷ Petterman, 1998, p. 184.

⁴⁰⁸ OECD, 2013, p.15.

⁴⁰⁹ DVB, 2014.

⁴¹⁰ SPARC(2), p.5.

⁴¹¹ Idem.

⁴¹² IIED (2), p.7.

⁴¹³ Idem.

available for them in their homes.⁴¹⁴ To visualise the “perfect” shelter they built three model houses together.⁴¹⁵ These model houses were used to show to other women but also to government officials and other professionals.⁴¹⁶ The model houses project started in one city and expanded then all over India with 3.500 houses being built and used in the country.^{417 418} In addition to the model houses, they also developed a new toilet and sanitation plan, which they implemented, after fighting for the State authorisation for years, in 1994. The land and cost of the construction of the sanitation facilities and the model houses was paid partly with the fund but mainly by the state, while the women themselves contributed labour, took over the supervision and management of the construction.

SEWA opened a housing trust in 1994 that focuses on the improvement of housing for poor women in the unorganised sector.⁴¹⁹ The housing trust offers counselling and technical assistance.⁴²⁰ Additionally, the responsible women for the housing fund attempt to influence housing and government infrastructures in both rural and urban areas through advocacy, to fulfil the needs of the members.⁴²¹

The housing activities by Mahila Milan and SEWA are empowering and participative on a psychological level according to Zimmerman, as the women discuss and define themselves how they want to address the issues revolving

⁴¹⁴ SPARC (2), p.6.

⁴¹⁵ Idem.

⁴¹⁶ Idem.

⁴¹⁷ Idem.

⁴¹⁸ IIED (2), p.7.

⁴¹⁹ Idem.

⁴²⁰ Idem.

⁴²¹ Idem.

around housing.⁴²² The activities can result in psychological strength and taking up new roles, for instance in relation to Mahila Milan's housing scheme, where some of the women entered into a constructive dialogue with state representatives. Additionally the women work together on accessing new resources to improve their own situation, which is considered as empowering by Pettit.⁴²³

4.2.4. Health Care

Health care is an important issue in Myanmar. As has been described in the literature review, both the HIV rate and the malaria rate in the country are high.⁴²⁴ Especially sex workers run a high risk of infection with HIV, as the condom use is low.⁴²⁵ What is ignored in many cases, are the psychological consequences of violence that sex workers can experience, which stay untreated in many cases.⁴²⁶

The women of **SEWA** have developed a Health Care system, which is based on education as well as on curative care.⁴²⁷ The health care system functions in strong collaboration with government health services for immunization, nutrition supplementation and family planning.⁴²⁸ The Health Care system also has a strong focus on working health and safety.⁴²⁹ The Health Care is lead by the women themselves and addresses common health care problems by providing information

⁴²² Zimmerman, 1995, p.582.

⁴²³ Pettit, 2012, p.7

⁴²⁴ ADB, 2012, p.8.

⁴²⁵ Talikoski & Gillieatt, 2005, p.193.

⁴²⁶ Farley & Barkan, 2008, pp.38-39.

⁴²⁷ Idem.

⁴²⁸ Idem.

⁴²⁹ Idem.

and health education.⁴³⁰ The women that receive assistance decide in many cases to stay engaged in the health care system after.⁴³¹ One woman explains, what happened after she decided to engage in the health care system: “Today, I am a full-time “barefoot doctor” and trained “dai” (midwife). I have organised 50 trainings for new dais. (...) I feel like I have been born again after I joined SEWA. (...) I make a living as a dai, my dark days are over now” (SEWA, 2009).

Jagori is engaged in violence intervention.⁴³² They run a peer helpline and support women for instance by accompanying them to the police or filing a complaint.⁴³³ Jagori runs Drop-In Centers, where women have the possibility to seek direct assistance from other women to address violence that they encounter. In 2012, 1200 women addresses issues in relation to violence in these drop-in centres.⁴³⁴

DMSC runs two facilities to promote sexual health for sex workers, the children of sex workers but also the sex workers clients.⁴³⁵ Additionally to doctors, peer educators are present in the clinics to discuss with the women on various issues for instance condom use or even flirt techniques.⁴³⁶

AFRO runs a drop-in centre in Hong Kong where sex workers can receive medical assistance, HIV counselling and information on legal rights.⁴³⁷ The drop-in centre

⁴³⁰ Idem.

⁴³¹ Idem.

⁴³² Jagori (1).

⁴³³ Idem.

⁴³⁴ Jagori, 2012, p.29.

⁴³⁵ Cornish, 2004, p.38.

⁴³⁶ Idem.

⁴³⁷ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.20.

serves as a meeting and discussion space for sex workers.⁴³⁸ In 2013, 2428 sex workers visited the centre.⁴³⁹ Additionally, 55 families visited the centre for counselling sessions.⁴⁴⁰ AFRO also runs a clinic where sex workers can get tested for STDs and HIV.⁴⁴¹ The people that work in the clinic are all Chinese medical students that volunteer in the clinic.⁴⁴² In 2012, the services of the clinic have been used 555 times.⁴⁴³ As sex workers are in many cases not daring to seek assistance or don't know where they could get it.⁴⁴⁴ AFRO is engaged in outreach work, which means that they go to red-light districts in Hong Kong and speak to the sex workers themselves.⁴⁴⁵ In the year 2013, AFRO made contact with 3063 sex workers of which 1631 were new contacts.⁴⁴⁶ AFRO also runs a telephone hotline, which runs 24 hours a day.⁴⁴⁷ Sex workers mainly use it to make appointments at the AFRO Drop-In Centre but also to receive legal and medical information.⁴⁴⁸

It is challenging to create a health care system that is based on empowering participation, as there is the necessity for collaboration with external actors for instance clinics or doctors. However, the SOG examples described have found ways to use empowering participation in a way that is both beneficial for the

⁴³⁸ Idem.

⁴³⁹ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.20.

⁴⁴⁰ Idem.

⁴⁴¹ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.23.

⁴⁴² Idem.

⁴⁴³ Idem

⁴⁴⁴ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.25.

⁴⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁴⁶ Idem.

⁴⁴⁷ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.27.

⁴⁴⁸ Idem.

women and the other involved actors. On one hand, the women have the possibility to talk to a peer on issues they want to talk about which can lead to a rise in mental strength and confidence.⁴⁴⁹ The inclusion of participation on the health care level can additionally lead to more women that are engaged in sex work, getting tested for instance for HIV. Especially in the case of SEWA, where some of the women engage in the health care system after they were patients themselves and learn a new job after, one can see how empowering participation in the health care sector through SOGs can be.

4.2.5. Employment

As has been stated in the literature review, women play a paradox role in Myanmar society. While they are seen as equal with men in some areas in life, religion still defines them as inferior, which can be one potential reason for a high number of women that are unemployed in Myanmar.⁴⁵⁰ For the development of the country and the fulfilment of all human rights for all, it is important to address issues in relation to unemployment in the country, which some of the SOGs do.

It is important to keep in mind that, SOGs can potentially address unemployment in all their activities because the members can potentially learn new skills that can assist them to find a job on the labour market. One example is, as described under health care, the member of SEWA, who learned to be a midwife after she had received herself assistance by the SOG, which is described under “health care and insurance”.

SEWA offers an activity entitled “Video Sewa” which offers some members a fixed

⁴⁴⁹ Zimmerman, 1995, p.582.

⁴⁵⁰ Klein, 2012, p.6

employment. Video is used as means to share information about the lives, hopes, achievements and struggles of their members.⁴⁵¹ The videos are used to communicate with government officials for instance politicians or policy makers.⁴⁵² Additionally the videos are shown to interested women, which often result in their motivation to join SEWA as well.⁴⁵³ The video project is completely in the hands of the self-employed women.⁴⁵⁴ This programme employs around 30 people and over 200 tapes have been produced with a total of around 20.000 views.⁴⁵⁵

SEWA has also identified, that many of their members are not able to work regularly because they need to take care of their children. Others take their children with them to work, which leads to the fact that these children do not have access to a regular education. To encounter this issue and enable parents to work while fulfilling the needs of their children, SEWA also runs childcare centres in various cities of India.⁴⁵⁶ The centres are for children of full-time working parents for example the children of tobacco workers, agricultural labourers and salt workers.⁴⁵⁷ The childcare centres have three main goals.⁴⁵⁸ They give the parents the possibility to the parents to work fulltime and by this sustaining their family from their pay.⁴⁵⁹ Additionally, the children have the possibility to get an education, which would not be secured if they had to stay with their parents during their

⁴⁵¹ Idem.

⁴⁵² Idem.

⁴⁵³ Idem.

⁴⁵⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵⁵ Idem.

⁴⁵⁶ Idem.

⁴⁵⁷ Idem.

⁴⁵⁸ Idem.

⁴⁵⁹ Idem.

working hours.⁴⁶⁰ Additionally, which is the empowering part, the childcare centres offer job openings for many women that are members of SEWA.⁴⁶¹

These activities are based on participation, as it is the women that are members that have created the activities and organise and manage them. The activities facilitate empowerment in the sense of community and connection to peers. The activities can lead to women gaining mastery over their environment and solve their issues in relation to unemployment, but also in relation to other topics for instance poverty or housing.^{462 463}

4.2.6. Collaboration and Advocacy

An important benefit of the work of SOGs is, that by taking up new roles and thus collaborating with other stakeholders, the outcomes of their activities allow the members of SOGs to enter into collaboration with other actors and to advocate for the rights of their members. These collaborations can be either for instance (1) with NGOs or other SOGs, to develop a common project but also (2) with governments to work on policies. As has been stated in the literature review, cooperation and communication between the main stakeholders, namely civil society and the government, can assist to address the core root causes of sexual exploitation in relation to sex tourism.⁴⁶⁴ This can be especially important in Myanmar, as the country entered in recent years into a process of inclusion of women in the political

⁴⁶⁰ Idem.

⁴⁶¹ Idem.

⁴⁶² GAATW, 2007, p.8

⁴⁶³ Pettit, 2012, p.7

⁴⁶⁴ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p. 29.

sphere.⁴⁶⁵

It is important to note, that all of the SOGs use the results of the activities described above to collaborate with other SOGs, NGOs and also governments. The activities described in the following part, are additional activities to raise awareness and enter into negotiations. For instance, the studies conducted by the academy of Jagori show, that only 5% of the women and girls consider public spaces in Delhi as space that is free from sexual violence and 75% of the women and girls said that they face sexual violence in their colonies.⁴⁶⁶ This information has been used by Jagori to develop recommendations on how to address these safety issues and to enter into a dialogue with state officials and policy developers.⁴⁶⁷

DMSC seeks to collaborate with other self-organised groups in Nepal and Bangladesh, as many of the Indian sex workers are from these countries.⁴⁶⁸

The women of **Jagori** run a safe city initiative, which consists of a collaboration of various actors to create new projects to address violence against women and achieve gender inclusiveness on every level within the society.⁴⁶⁹ Jagori is well known in India for their campaigns to raise awareness for violence against women.⁴⁷⁰ For instance a campaign entitled One Billion Rising – New Delhi, which

⁴⁶⁵ Euro-Burma Office, p.14.

⁴⁶⁶ Jagori, 2012, p.5.

⁴⁶⁷ Idem.

⁴⁶⁸ UNAIDS, 2000, p.58.

⁴⁶⁹ Jagori (1).

⁴⁷⁰ Idem.

brought together 65 organizations and individuals and consists of advocacy for violence against women.⁴⁷¹

AFRO is engaged in a yearly festival, with music and speeches, which leads to a higher general acceptance of the group and the sex workers themselves.⁴⁷² AFRO also seeks to educate the general public on the sex industry and sex workers in Hong Kong.⁴⁷³ In 2013 they held various discussion rounds in schools and reached over 1200 individuals.⁴⁷⁴ Additionally, the sex workers of AFRO are part of the sex workers freedom festival, which brings different sex workers organisations from Hong Kong together for exchange and outreach purposes.⁴⁷⁵ On the international human rights day, AFRO held an event on how human rights of sex workers should and could be protected.⁴⁷⁶ AFRO conducts research on various topics, which is used for advocacy purposes for instance for negotiations with lawmakers and politicians.⁴⁷⁷ In 2013, a survey on violence experiences and occupational health and safety of sex workers was conducted.⁴⁷⁸

The collaboration and advocacy activities are organised by the SOGs themselves. Thus the women have the possibility to question and address their external conditions and realise that they can potentially have an influence on their future themselves, which according to the scholars Worell and Remer, leads to

⁴⁷¹ Jagori (1).

⁴⁷² Idem.

⁴⁷³ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.33.

⁴⁷⁴ Idem.

⁴⁷⁵ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.34.

⁴⁷⁶ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.35.

⁴⁷⁷ Action for Reach-Out, 2013, p.38.

⁴⁷⁸ Idem.

empowerment.⁴⁷⁹

4.3. Empowered Outcomes

As has been described in the sections on the specific topics, all the activities by SOGs can have psychologically empowering outcomes for every individual. The following pages offer a short summary of these potential empowering outcomes of participative activities by SOGs.

The activities can lead to various horizontal-learning scenarios. Horizontal learning means learning through the experiences and the sharing of peers.⁴⁸⁰ This is an important asset for communities, as they can develop a strong network, which can be a powerful resource for individuals in many instances as also described by the scholar Paulo Freire.⁴⁸¹

Additionally, the activities can augment the member's confidence, which can give them the strength of addressing their needs themselves.⁴⁸² For instance some of the activities raised a media interest, the women were interviewed and they realise they are valued as "experts" on a topic.⁴⁸³ The activities offer a substantial basis to the women and their communities to enter into a dialogue with external stakeholders for instance government institutions and strengthen the growth of the local capability.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ Worell & Remer, 1992, p.22.

⁴⁸⁰ SPARC (2), p.2.

⁴⁸¹ SPARC (4), p.18.

⁴⁸² IIED (2), p.7.

⁴⁸³ Patel, 2002, p.131.

⁴⁸⁴ Idem.

The women can also learn important technical skills, which can improve their chances on the job market.⁴⁸⁵ The activities raise the women's awareness for the issues around them.⁴⁸⁶ The different projects foster the women's knowledge on how to address these issues. The fact that the women learn to address these issues themselves can potentially lead to a change in attitude of the women themselves but also of the community around them. For instance if a member of Mahila Milan realises that she has the possibility to sustain her family without having to enter into an exploitative situation. Additionally, the women gain various skills that can have a direct impact for instance on their accessibility to the job market.

The success of the activities, leads to an aspiration for change and to an additional motivation to address issues in their surroundings.⁴⁸⁷ By taking up new roles, the women gain confidence, which can help them in future situations in their life for instance through a higher resilience.⁴⁸⁸

It is important to mention, that empowered outcomes don't end on the personal psychological level but the activities by SOGs can also trigger empowered outcomes within the society. This can for instance be a potential change in the behaviour of the community and the women. While women in Asia are involved in most issues around home and the life of the community their contribution is in many cases invisible or taken for granted by both themselves and the members of

⁴⁸⁵ Patel, 2002, p.131.

⁴⁸⁶ Worell & Remer, 1992, p.22.

⁴⁸⁷ Idem.

⁴⁸⁸ Idem.

their communities.⁴⁸⁹ The activities manage to provide the women of the self-organised groups with important skills, support and resources to address this issue. The activities lead to women taking up new decision-making roles and accepting leadership positions.⁴⁹⁰ “By strengthening what women do and getting recognition for its usefulness, by men, the women grow both individually and collectively and become an invaluable asset to the community” (SPARC (2), p. 9). Additionally, the activities by the SOGs can raise awareness for vulnerable women and sex workers rights on the governmental level, which can potentially lead to a change in their opinion and put an end to stigmatization and have a positive impact on policies and social action.⁴⁹¹

In the long-term, the empowering activities by SOGs can be a potential change in the conditions for women in a vulnerable situation and women that are trying to address issues in relation to sex work. As they take up new roles and address potential issues, they build a strong network, which can lead to a higher acceptance of women in a patriarchal society and foster non-discrimination. Additionally, the activities can lead to more acceptance of women within the society, which means that they might accede to equal civic rights of the SOGs can be equality and more rights for women in Asia.

As this chapter has shown, activities by SOGs can foster empowerment of both women that are in a vulnerable situation and women that are already engaged in sex work.

⁴⁸⁹ SPARC (2), p.9.

⁴⁹⁰ Idem.

⁴⁹¹ Idem.

5. Chapter Five: Recommendations And Conclusion

The fifth and final chapter of this document consists, in the first part of recommendations for the government of Myanmar, which should be implemented and respected, in order to achieve an environment that is encouraging empowering participation to address sex tourism. In the next part of the chapter, the author describes a hypothetical example for the practical application of the recommendations by the State. In a last part, the study and its outcomes are summarised in a conclusion.

5.1. Recommendations

The previous pages, illustrate how empowered participation through self-organised groups can be used (1) in the context of vulnerable groups, and (2) in the context of sex workers that want to address issues in relation to their work. The following pages give recommendations for the government of Myanmar, on how to create an environment in their country that is favourable for empowering participation in self-organised groups and empowered outcomes.

It is important to point out here that the government can promote the creation of SOGs and empowered participation of women, by providing them with different resources as for instance space or financial support. Nevertheless the following recommendations do not include this aspect, because it is important that other endorsements are in place before these resources by the State can be used in an adequate way.

5.1.1. Sex work and sex tourism need to be addressed by the government.

As has been described in the 3rd chapter, the State of Myanmar is engaged in

developing a sustainable tourism sector in Myanmar, which benefits foremost the community. However, in none of the documents published on tourism in Myanmar, the government addresses potential human rights issues in relation to sex tourism.

First of all, it is of crucial importance that the government of Myanmar breaks the taboo and starts to address sex work and sex tourism. By overlooking both issues, the government cannot prevent and address the creation of the phenomenon, which can thus potentially lead to a lack of prevention and an aggravated situation for the concerned people of the community. Addressing the issues does not only mean addressing issues in relation to sex work directly but also issues in relation to women that are in a vulnerable situation and could potentially end up in engaging in sex work.

***5.1.2. Vulnerable women and sex workers can be
“agents of change”.***

As the theory and the case analysis, included in this paper, show: if women have the possibility to start and maintain an empowering and participative process, they can potentially identify issues and solutions themselves. It is of crucial importance that the government of Myanmar acknowledges that women in a vulnerable situation, or women that are engaged in sex work, can play an active role in change and self-represent themselves.⁴⁹² The acknowledgment of these women being agents of change or experts, instead of victims, is a crucial precondition for change, as power relations between government and communities can potentially shift and create a receptive environment for change.

⁴⁹² GAATW, 2007, p.8

Especially, horizontal learning, which means learning through sharing and discussing with peers, is an important asset in this context. The government of Myanmar needs to refrain from the classical view that education can only happen in the classical teacher student situation and instead broaden its perception to the extent that sharing and discussing between peers can potentially be more effective in the Myanmar context. Especially, the concept of Paula Freire, who starts education by defining issues of the community and using active learning methods, can be an important theory here.⁴⁹³ As has been demonstrated in this paper, sharing and discussing has additional benefits for the participants for instance community building, mental strength or personal confidence.

5.1.3. Collaboration: the key for change.

As has been demonstrated throughout the review of the SOG cases, it is effective to encourage women to engage in participative processes, as they can develop an understanding for external conditions that have an impact on their situation.⁴⁹⁴ In various instances, governments tend to develop policies, laws and programmes for women in a vulnerable position or to address issues to sex work in order to change their standard of living and in some cases even to empower, without including the advice or opinion of the concerned people. It is important to evaluate and reflect on how a state creates and obtains information about communities in order to potentially develop a new adequate system that includes the needs of everyone.

As stated by Zimmerman, empowerment is a process, which can lead to people, organizations, and communities gaining mastery over issues of concern that are of

⁴⁹³ Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p.382

⁴⁹⁴ Worell & Remer, 1992, p.22.

great importance to them.⁴⁹⁵ It is of crucial importance that the government agrees to include the communities and especially women, into all the important processes and decisions in relation to sex tourism in Myanmar, in order (1) to develop a holistic approach to address the topic and (2) to identify the most constructive possible solution. Especially in relation to sex tourism and sex work, the inclusion of both vulnerable women and sex workers can be an asset to identify potential issues and solutions.

The prior review shows that it is of crucial importance to collaborate with women in a vulnerable situation, and women involved in sex work that want to address issues in relation to their occupation, to achieve change from within. Additionally, this collaboration can empower the women, as they are valued for their experience and realize that they can have a positive impact on their situation. The government of Myanmar should make use of their potential role as facilitator and organise collaborative situations for all potentially involved stakeholders for instance state actors, SOGs, civil society organisations and the hospitality industry.

Additionally, it is important to mention here, that through collaboration, the State can make a step into the reduction of discrimination and stigmatization of vulnerable women and sex workers.

5.1.4. Processes with a limited time frame are not effective.

As has been seen in the literature review and is also illustrated in the example section of this document, it is of crucial importance that empowering participative

⁴⁹⁵ Zimmerman, 1995, p.581.

processes are not bound to any time regulations. As the definitions of both empowerment and participation are vague, this leads to the fact that outcomes can vary as well and happen for every individual at different instances of time.⁴⁹⁶ It is of crucial importance that the government does not limit the time of SOGs by for instance putting a deadline until when they would need input. As empowering participation is a continuous process, it is of immense meaning that the government respects the work time of the groups in order to facilitate fruitful empowering participation.

It is of great importance that the government of Myanmar respects the above-cited recommendations to be able to use the concept of empowered participation as a potential strategy to address issues in relation to sex tourism in the country.

5.2. Application of the Recommendations

The following subchapter offers hypothetical examples on how the recommendations could be applied by the State of Myanmar in order to address sex tourism in Myanmar.

If the government decides to make use of the concept of empowering participation through self-organised groups to address sex tourism, it is of great importance, as written in the recommendations, that the state acknowledges that vulnerable women and sex workers can be agents of change. The state can identify both SOGs and agents of change in two different ways. The first is by appointing a community liaison manager, who works closely with various communities and is present on the field. The community liaison manager would work as a potential link

⁴⁹⁶ Cornish, 2006.

between the SOGs and the government. Another method for identification could be to establish a link to NGOs that have a strong connection with communities and especially with women's rights. Both the liaison manager and the NGOs would then update the government with general information on SOGs and potential agents of change who wants to enter into collaboration with the government. It is of great importance that the State accepts that empowering participation is a process that takes time, and that the collaboration with agents of change can only be based on voluntary choice and not on appointing. This means, that the state should refrain from entering the communities and randomly choosing participants for collaboration. It is important that the women themselves choose which women want to be agents of change.

The women that have been identified as change agents by both the SOGs and the state would be the link between the groups and the government. In general, they could either report to the community liaison manager, that the government could appoint, as mentioned above, or to another member of the government. It is important that a specific person is responsible within the government, for the communications with the SOGs, to ensure that the government receives all the information that the SOGs submit. It is also important that the change agents themselves determine a mechanism of how they want to report, this could for instance be a weekly mail contact combined with a monthly meeting. It is of great importance that the government, the change agents and other involved actors define clear roles and have the same expectations of the collaboration. The government should accept if change agents decide to quit their positions.

As there might be several women's SOGs that work on different topics, for instance vulnerable women or issues in relation to sex work, it would be a great asset for all the actors to facilitate meetings between the different SOGs and offer them the possibility to share their experiences. This could additionally lead to organisational

empowering and cross learning, as SOGs could for instance learn from each other's processes. These meetings could also potentially lead to a reduction of discrimination and stigmatization of sex workers, as all the participating members might recognise that they share the same struggles and hopes.

The change agents should play an important role in the SOGs, which means that they should be involved in as many meetings and activities as possible, in order to gather relevant information. In meetings, the change agents together with the SOGs should define which information they want to share with the government and why. The state has to acknowledge the topics the women want to address, even if these can differ from the priorities of the government, as this is the only way to address sex tourism effectively through empowering participation. It is important that the change agents respect the privacy of the members of the group and do not specifically mention names in relation to experiences that are shared with the government.

The state can monitor the learning process of the women through different methods. First of all, they could develop a questionnaire for the self-organised groups. As empowering participation is a continuous process, it is important that these questionnaires and interviews are held in longitudinal study, which does not end as long as the self-organised group exists. Additionally, the women could keep journals in relation to their experiences in SOGs, to document various developments. It is important to keep in mind, that the journal would be a good method to ensure addressing topics that are important to the women themselves. It is crucial to note that some of the women might be illiterate, which can be addressed by having painted journals that are explained to potential researchers. Another method of monitoring could again be the collaboration with NGOs that have a close links to civil society. The NGOs could develop their own monitoring mechanism, for instance a questionnaire or focus groups, and report to the

government on the recent developments, in relation to learning and achievements of the self-organised groups.

As seen above, there are many different ways to successfully address sex tourism through empowering participation in self-organised groups in Myanmar. In the following part of the chapter, the author summarises the outcomes of this study and reflects on its further use and potential implications.

5.3. Conclusion

As described in this paper, in parallel with the increase in tourism, it is highly likely that sex tourism will rise in Myanmar as well.⁴⁹⁷ ⁴⁹⁸ Sex tourism can lead to women's human rights violations and can be an obstacle in the creation of sustainable tourism, thus it needs to be addressed by the State.⁴⁹⁹

This study looks at empowered participation in self-organised women's groups as a way to address sex tourism in Myanmar. The document shows that self-organising can lead to empowered outcomes, for instance the creation of new identities and roles, positive self-assessments and learning opportunities, which can lead to potential change in the communities.⁵⁰⁰ These empowered outcomes can result in the addressing of sex tourism related human rights issues on various levels, for instance (1) for the women: unemployment or poverty (2) on a societal level: reduction of discrimination and stigmatization. Thus, empowering participation in self-organised groups does not only benefit the women and the government, but

⁴⁹⁷ Kyaw, 2012.

⁴⁹⁸ Williams, 2012, p.1.

⁴⁹⁹ Nuttavuthisit, 2007, p.24.

⁵⁰⁰ Zimmerman, 1995, p.583.

also other civil society actors and individuals that are in contact with the members of the SOGs. For instance, a child that grows up with a mother, who believes in her own “power” and demonstrates mental strength and confidence, is more likely to develop confidence and mental strength itself.

Additionally, by using the knowledge of self-organised groups, the government can get a holistic view of sex tourism and sex work related issues. This allows the government to publish policies and laws that are based upon a realistic assessment of the situation and can address all the potential human rights violations that are linked to the phenomenon. Additionally, supporting and collaborating with self-organised groups could be an effective strategy for the government of Myanmar, in order to build up the trust of their citizens, which is currently lacking, as demonstrated in the third chapter, due to the historic developments within the country.⁵⁰¹

I would like to mention, that I when I started writing this paper I knew, that self-organised groups are of great importance, but now, after having read all these reports about individual success stories, I am more convinced then ever about the utility of this concept.

The past has shown how tourism development in Asia can lead to negative impacts for the communities on various levels. Myanmar can, by addressing sex tourism through empowering participation in self-organised groups and by ensuring sustainable tourism, respect the human rights of its citizens and at the same time be an example for the future of tourism. The author has given clear recommendations to the State of Myanmar on how to support the creation of these

⁵⁰¹ OECD, 2013, p.17.

self-organised women's groups and how to make resourceful use of their knowledge. As tourism in Myanmar is currently developing, the author of this paper, is convinced that human rights violations related to sex tourism can be addressed in Myanmar through the use of empowered participation in self-organised groups, with the indispensable support of the government.

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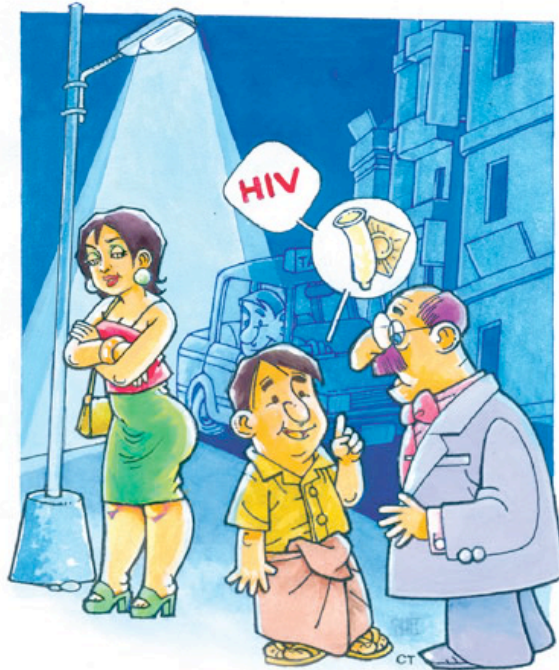
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Appendix A

28



Practice safe sex.

Prostitution is illegal in Myanmar.

Source: <http://www.dosanddentsfortourists.com/> (19. June 2014)

Abstract

Sex tourism is potentially going to rise in relation to the development of the tourism sector in Myanmar. The author of this thesis analyses how the State of Myanmar could address issues in relation to sex tourism, through the use of empowering participation in self-organised groups, both for (1) women, that are in a vulnerable situation and for (2) women, that are engaged in sex work. The author reviews literature in relation to empowerment, participation and sex tourism, offers information about Myanmar and uses examples from different Asian self-organised groups, in order to illustrate the practical use of empowered participation. In order to address sex tourism through empowering participation in self-organised groups, the author gives the following recommendations to the State of Myanmar: (1) sex work and sex tourism need to be addressed by the government, (2) vulnerable women and sex workers can be “agents of change”, (3) collaboration is the key for change, and (4) processes with a limited timeframe are not effective. A hypothetical example illustrates how these recommendations could be applied and monitored by the State, in order to support empowering participation in self-organised groups in Myanmar.

Abstrakt

Die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass Sex Tourismus in Myanmar in den nächsten Jahren, im Zusammenhang mit dem Anstieg an Tourismus, zunehmen wird ist hoch. Die Autorin dieser Studie analysiert, wie der Staat Myanmar Sex Tourismus adressieren könnte, durch „empowering“ Partizipation in Selbst-organisierten Gruppen, für sowohl (1) Frauen die sich in einer vulnerablen Situation befinden, als auch (2) Frauen die bereits als Sex Arbeiterinnen aktiv sind. Die Autorin analysiert Literatur zu den Themen „empowerment“, Partizipation und Sex Tourismus, protokolliert relevante Informationen zu Myanmar und analysiert anschließend die praktische Anwendung von „empowering“ Partizipation durch konkrete Beispiele von Selbst-organisierten Gruppen in Asien. Um Sex Tourismus durch

„empowering“ Partizipation adressieren zu können, gibt die Autorin folgende Empfehlungen für den Staat Myanmar: (1) Sex Arbeit und Sex Tourismus müssen vom Staat adressiert werden, (2) vulnerable Frauen und Sex Arbeiterinnen können Agenten für Veränderung sein, (3) Kollaboration ist der Schlüssel zur Veränderung, und (4) Prozesse mit einem limitierten Zeitrahmen sind nicht effektiv. Ein hypothetisches Beispiel illustriert anschließend wie die Empfehlungen angewandt und überprüft werden können um „empowering“ Partizipation in selbst-organisierten Gruppen in Myanmar zu unterstützen.