Statement: Commemoration of the 17th Anniversary

28 March 2016

March 28, 2016 marked 17 years since SWAN’s founding. On this occasion, we would like to take the opportunity to express our great appreciation to all friends, partners, individual supporters, and various organizations that support our continued efforts to deliver education for disfranchised children, empowerment of women, basic health education and services through feminist principles.

From 23 to 25 March 2016, we held our annual strategic planning workshop, participated by 26 full-time staff members. Immediately following, we held SWAN's 17th Anniversary Meeting, in which 47 SWAN members participated in annual reporting and planning, as well as the celebration of SWAN's 17th birthday, during which we expressed our hopes for 2016.

SWAN hopes that the new government of Burma, elected by the people through the 2015 elections, will be the first step toward the realization of the long overdue aspiration of ethnic nationalities to establish a democratic Federal Union. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the tension among armed groups, the increased presence of Burmese army troops in Shan State, and the emerging aggression among ethnic armed organizations after the signing of the nationwide cease-fire agreement, which did not include all parties involved.

The people of Burma, particularly those from ethnic nationalities, are those who suffer most in the face of recent fighting and continuing civil war. The majority of internally displaced people and refugees created by the armed conflict are women and children, who face a multitude of difficulties.

A rush of investment in Burma since 2011 has seen the people's ancestral land confiscated, farmland destroyed and livelihoods devastated due to a demonstrated lack of responsibility, accountability and transparency. Failure by the authorities to take measures against nationwide widespread drug problems, greed and entrenched corruption poses threats to the safety and security of women and children.

Shan Women's Action Network would like to urge everyone involved in the continuing armed conflict to stop creating military tension. We call for sustainable peace with a strong focus on human rights, justice and the end of all forms of violence. We strongly urge all stakeholders, including the new government, to work together for the establishment of a democratic Federal Union. We wish for equality among all ethnic nationalities, so that the people of Burma may live in peaceful co-existence.

Contact Persons:
Ying Harn Fah, 0892627848
Muay Noom Hom, 0833218283

P.O Box 120, Phrasing Post Office, Chiang Mai 50205, Thailand, Website: www.shanwomen.org