UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

INDEPENDENT • FEMINIST • COMMUNITY-BASED
TEAM-BASED • NON-PROFIT • NON-GOVERNMENT
Who is SWAN?

SWAN is a network of women from Burma's Shan ethnic group active in Burma and Thailand. We were founded on 28 March 1999, and have received international recognition for our work promoting the rights of Burma's women.

SWAN is a founding member of the Women's League of Burma (WLB), an umbrella women's organization comprising 13 women's groups from Burma involved in peace processes and political change.

Our Values

- Independent
- Feminist
- Community-based
- Team-based
- Non-profit
- Non-governmental

Our mission

We commit ourselves to work for gender equality and justice for women in the struggle for social and political change in Burma through community-based actions, research and advocacy.

Our guiding objectives

P - Promoting women’s rights and the rights of their children
O - Opposing the exploitation of women and children
W - Working together for peace and freedom
E - Empowering women for a better life
R - Raising awareness to preserve natural resources and the environment
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**With Determination, SWAN's Work Continues**

SWAN's network of women work together towards gender equality and justice for the women of Burma and their families, and for community empowerment, and social and political change within the country.

2015 was an historic year with elections sweeping the National League of Democracy to victory in November. This new era in Burma's political journey, however, features ongoing struggles for women with their rights not set to be substantially addressed anytime soon. The year also saw renewed conflict in Shan State displacing more than 10,000 people and SWAN received numerous reports of widespread human rights violations. Continuing through 2015, SWAN pushed for the rights of women and their children, and for justice for ongoing crimes against them, challenging the status quo through women-lead, community based advocacy and programming. Gender equality is far from being realised in modern Burma. Whilst women are being subjected to abuse and war, their voices are routinely silenced and there are very few women included in the peace negotiations.

As a founding member of the Women’s League of Burma (WLB), SWAN continues to participate fully in this important coalition of 13 member organisations; promoting women’s human rights, and women’s participation in decision-making processes at different levels including peace building and reconciliation initiatives. In 2015, one SWAN member continued to serve as a WLB Policy Board member, and two senior SWAN members were on the Advisory Board. Early in 2015, SWAN members assisted in organizing the **Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Peace Process During the Transitional Period** meetings, attended by all WLB members.

One of SWAN’s senior members, and member of the WLB Advisory Board, took a leading role in the planning and producing of **WLB’s CEDAW Shadow Report on Burma** submitted to the committee at the 64th **CEDAW Session**. This critical document details an assessment of the State’s obligation for advancement of women’s rights in Burma in particular in ethnic and conflict-affected areas. Moreover, she acted as an overall liaison person for all women’s networks across border namely CEDAW Action Myanmar(CAM), Women's Organizations Network (WON), Gender Equality Network (GEN) which submitted their shadow reports for the 64th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).  

2015 saw SWAN continuing to collaborate with other civil society actors in the movement for the realisation of the rights of ethnic people in Burma. SWAN partnered with the Shan Human Rights Foundation to put together media releases on human rights violations to inform the international community in particular on the return of armed conflict to Shan State. SWAN also worked alongside Shan Community Based Organisations (Shan CBO’s, another important network) to lobby and campaign for the cessation of both damaging resource extraction projects like the Salween Dam Project, and also dangerous armed conflicts occurring in Shan State. SWAN staff members from Taunggyi, inside Shan State, are active in community mobilizing efforts, supporting community members in their campaigns against environmental degradation.

On networking and community consultation trips to meet with active individuals, women's groups, youth networks, political parties, NGO’s, leaders and teachers, SWAN staff members further developed important relationships; introduced SWAN’s activities and learnt more about unique situations in different parts of Shan State. The main concerns raised in particular by community members included violence against women, widespread drug use (particularly among men and youth), environmental degradation and land grabbing by resource extraction companies and also by powerful individuals when village populations become displaced because of armed conflict where they originate. SWAN found that these meetings provide local women with renewed energy to continue their work. We were able to get first hand information where international agencies often cannot. This allows us to identify the needs of each community.

Amidst the changing conditions of the Burmese political and social landscapes, SWAN continued to work for the women and children, ensuring their rights are upheld and promoted. While many SWAN members do this work unpaid, much of SWAN’s essential work in advocacy, peace building, networking, community consultations and community mobilising is completed with the funding support from our partners.

The Information and Documentation Department works to provide local and international communities with information regarding various issues affecting local people, particularly women.

In 2015, the Information and Documentation Department (ID) documented cases of human rights abuses and violence against women, participated in networking and collaborative activities with other civil society organisations and oversaw all of SWAN’s media output including a website, social media, community radio and audio-visual materials. Documentation of all SWAN meetings, maintenance of all photos and film archives, updating of all SWAN’s organisational development material is also ID’s role.

Within Burma, there is limited access to news and the internet, particularly in rural areas, so printed media is still very much necessary and important. SWAN has been producing large ‘newsletters’ for years in magazine format; full of articles about all manner of women’s issues. In 2015, SWAN produced its first ever two newsletter in Burmese in, as well as newsletters #30 and #31 in Shan. As Burmese is the language taught in schools, many people are literate in Burmese. Whilst in Shan State the majority of people consider Shan their first language, many are illiterate in this language because of restrictions on the teaching of ethnic languages in schools. Therefore, SWAN decided to write and print the next issues in Burmese in order to reach out to more women in various ethnic communities in Shan State and beyond in wider Burma.

Topics covered in these 4 newsletters included women in politics, democratic processes, and challenges regarding the November election. In the first Burmese newsletter, the ID Department introduced SWAN’s work to the new readership, and also discussed feminism and women’s empowerment, and ways women can become active.

Damaging resource extraction accelerates in Shan State. The importance of print, radio and social media, as well as documentation, to resource extraction campaigns lead ID to conducted a workshop on the effects of mining on women to encourage mobilisation. SWAN also conducted consultations with community campaigners to document information about the controversial Salween Dam project and coal and gold mining in the areas.

Due to the lack of communication infrastructure in Shan State, daily radio news remains the favoured platform for news and information. SWAN’s community radio program, “Heng Jai Ying” (Girl’s Power) takes women’s rights and issues as its focus, ensuring that the voices of women are heard through this important medium. In 2015 SWAN added one more station, bringing it to three stations that play Girl’s Power; on air Monday through until Thursday. See page 6 for more details of Girl’s Power Radio.

In response to continuous requests from women in Shan State to provide drug education to local people in an accessible format, SWAN produced a audio-visual documentary. Finalised in March 2015, ‘It’s Time To Shatter The Silence’ was launched at SWAN’s 16th Anniversary and Annual General Meeting. It covers the widespread abuse of opium, heroin and meth-amphetamines. Importantly, it addresses how a husband's addictions or those of another close family members can overburden women further, and emotionally and financially affect the whole family.

SWAN has a strong presence on the internet with a website in 4 languages that had over 20,000 visitors in 2015, active Facebook and twitter accounts, and our AV productions posted to our YouTube channel. To see more, stay in touch and to read back issues of SWAN newsletters, visit:

Website: www.shanwomen.org
Facebook: ‘Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN)’
Twitter: @Shanwomen
Youtube: ‘Swan Kenneri.’
With all-women presenters, Girls Power Radio is SWAN’s way of reaching Shan speakers around the world with conversations and current affairs that affect women.

Heng Jai Ying means Girl’s Power! SWAN’s Information and Documentation Department’s radio program promotes the empowerment of women and more generally raises awareness to provide educational information to the local Shan community. We are reaching out to migrant, ethnic and local communities with news, information, health education, general knowledge and entertainment.

Listeners include Shan migrant and refugee workers in northern Thailand, communities in Shan State. Additionally, the online broadcasting that began in 2015, Shan speakers all around the world can listen in.

Two of our radio stations are based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and in October, SWAN’s radio program in Fang, on the Thai-Burma border, also resumed operation after restrictions place by Thailand’s military government in 2014 were lifted.

Girls’ Power Radio is broadcast on: MAP Radio, FM99, in Chiang Mai, and live on www.mapradio.org on Wednesday and Thursday 1pm - 3pm (Thailand time); SHAN Online Radio every Monday and Tuesday 1pm - 2pm at www.radio.panglong.org; and on Fang Community Radio locally on FM93.5.

Our programming on these three stations updates and informs people about:
- SWAN’s events and activities,
- women and children’s health,
- education,
- mental health,
- reproductive health,
- family planning,
- women’s leadership,
- famous women in the world,
- brave women in history,
- domestic violence against women,
- peace building,
- environmental issues,
- the history behind important days retelling women and children’s stories,
- jokes, fun and entertainment,
- Shan and Burmese songs,
- general info for daily life.
In 2015, SWAN continued to support schools on the border and within Shan State, in Burma, held another successful summer camp for Shan language and cultural literacy, provided teachers with extra training, and scholarships to underprivileged students.

In 2015, SWAN’s Education Program supported 2,034 students attending 11 schools on the Thai-Burma border (3 nursery schools and 8 primary schools), and 456 students in two schools inside Shan State** a total of 2,490 students. SWAN also accommodated 158 children in three boarding houses along the border whose parents need support as their work is usually migratory.

SWAN provided teaching materials, students’ lunches, food for boarders, hygiene supplies, transportation for students, school administration costs, and salaries for 43 teachers, 4 cooks and 3 staff members throughout the year. For our valued teachers, SWAN organised professional development Teacher Training for 33 (28 female, 5 male) from community schools in central Shan State during the 2015 summer break. They learnt new methods of student assessment which are focused on gaining a thorough understanding of each student's progress and needs, and ensuring each child receives personalised assistance in the classroom. Teachers were able to practice teaching techniques that emphasise active classroom participation and encourage critical thinking.

A total of 3280 students attended SWAN's 2015 Summer Literacy Classes, granting these Shan children the opportunity to learn in their mother language. SWAN’s support provided teaching materials, including Shan language textbooks for the classes, and also covered student transportation and teacher’s administration costs. In Burma, the military backed government banned the teaching of ethnic languages in schools. The summer literacy classes help to ensure the preservation of the Shan culture in younger generations through the teaching of language, history and cultural traditions.

Many communities in Shan State have been deleteriously affected by conflict, poverty and increased drug use and cultivation. In fact, renewed conflict in the Wan Hai area in October meant that SWAN’s two schools in central Shan State were forced to close temporarily. As a result of these prevailing conditions, Shan youth are particularly susceptible to drug abuse and other antisocial behaviour. Building links between community elders and youth is considered vital so that young people receive mentoring and guidance. Cultural education through the summer literacy classes has proven an important way to build these connections.

In 2015, SWAN’s education team conducted 13 monitoring trips to evaluate schools’ progress and the boarding houses. Program staff members meet with teachers and students. SWAN scholarship holders were also met with. Our monitoring activities primarily use participatory methods; group discussion, observation, and interviews to illicit strengths and needs. Group workshops were held that brought together SWAN’s local teachers with school principals. SWAN met with the parent committees and the community leaders also.

SWAN’s Education Program faced funding challenges this year. With the end of all DFID funding in December 2015, many of the schools and residences have been left without reliable ongoing funding, and two schools have been closed. SWAN has secured some funding allowing continued support to some of the schools, however more funding is needed. We wish to acknowledge that without funding support, important advancements in the education of Shan children, youths and teachers would not have been achieved.

(Nota that Education's funding is provided over the school year thus this ED report covers the time up until March, 2016.)
KIDS STAY IN SCHOOL LONGER IF THEY ATTEND NURSERY SCHOOL

SWAN works to instill our students with pride in their education. Without funding from our partners and donors these children would have no education at all. There are no other free options for going school in their villages apart from SWAN funded schools. SWAN's analysis of school attendance statistics covering more than two decades shows that there is a clear correlation between attending nursery school and continuing with schooling past the primary level. SWAN has 3 nursery schools and we would like to fund more to ensure more children can get a secondary school education.

PRIDE IN CULTURE, EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Among our students there are several ethnicities. SWAN-funded primary schools are supportive of traditional cultures as well as providing and excellent education in a hope to reverse the worrying trend of dropping out once primary education has been completed. Once a week and on special days children are encouraged to wear their traditional dress and to be proud of their cultures and of each others. This photo was taken on one such day. These girls are reading books written and published by their peers. Three SWAN students won a prize at the national level for their efforts in writing and illustrating such a story together.
Wan Pen has a big dream, and the motivation and abilities to reach it. She also has a heart condition and is an orphan. She wants to share her story as a way to thank SWAN and our partners for their support, and to reach out to those that are thinking of donating to SWAN.

Wan Pen (her real name) was born in Chiang Mai of migrant worker parents that had escaped from Burma. Her mother disappeared when she was just 2, then her father died when she was 12. During primary school she was diagnosed with a major heart problem and began extensive medical treatment. She was unofficially adopted by her friend’s family when they realised how poor her father was. At first, they helped with medical expenses. Not being a Thai citizen she has no right to government funded medical care. Soon enough though, her new family could not afford to pay for her operations and her doctors fees. At a point when Wan Pen was in hospital awaiting yet another open-heart surgery, they withdrew all their support: financial and emotional. She was devastated at the loss of her adopted family and she needed support.

She was eventually referred to SWAN by social workers at the hospital where our workers are known for their assistance to migrant workers from Shan State. Since 2013, she has lived in our Women’s Crisis Centre. Wan Pen is now in her final school year. She is excelling in her subjects and regularly wins regional and national level competitions in subjects from English to science.

She’s got her heart set on gaining a Bachelor Degree in Psychology to help people from various communities to deal with mental ill-health and trauma. She’d like to work for SWAN with Internally Displaced People’s and be a community counsellor and trauma specialist.
Women's Wellbeing Program (WWP)

SWAN’s Women’s Wellbeing Program supports community-managed, participatory health interventions for vulnerable and displaced populations in rural areas of Shan State, Burma, in the border’s refugee camps, and in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand.

During 2015, SWAN supported health care services for communities in Burma and Thailand, and provided emergency support to displaced communities along the border through its crisis support centres in Thailand (Fang and Chiang Mai). SWAN ran training sessions to increase the capacity of existing health workers, and held health education sessions in various schools and with other groups. Additionally, SWAN-supported health workers conducted another important annual community health data survey.

The WWP program is comprised of three components:

1. Support for reproductive and child health education and service delivery program among displaced rural people living in Shan State.

Displaced people in Thailand are not recognized as refugees. As such, they often lack legal identification, and are afraid to access local hospitals and medical clinics. SWAN reaches as many displaced people of any ethnicity from Shan State as we can, however the sheer numbers of those displaced makes it impossible to help all people affected.

Continued conflict, including an escalation in late 2015, in Shan State means that SWAN’s health workers sometimes operate in under very difficult conditions, servicing IDP populations who often lack access to any other health care.

Despite all this, SWAN’s Women’s Wellbeing Program collated and analysed the data collected by community health workers from 66 villages/village clusters in their catchment areas. The results gave us a detailed insight into the current needs of SWAN supported communities. They also showed us that SWAN’s family planning activities have been successful in allowing women to time their births according to their own needs and wishes. The results of these surveys will inform SWAN’s Women’s Wellbeing Program planning and implementation.

Upon analysis, it was found that the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) in these villages is extremely high, at 74.4%. This is more than double that of the current estimated CPR for Burma as a whole (30-35%). Of the 1,846 married women of reproductive age in SWAN’s survey, 1,374 were presently using a modern family planning method. These high CPR’s are very unusual for rural/remote areas of eastern Burma, where central and state governments generally do not have any presence and health infrastructure is lacking. It should be noted that some SWAN health workers have been operating in their respective catchment areas for 5-10 years and have provided a great deal of health education and reproductive health services to local women, affecting the contraceptive prevalence rate.

In 2015, SWAN health workers organized school health education workshops in rural villages in Kesi Township, Shan State, for more than 500 students. The health workers provided health education on topics such as good hygiene practices, nutrition, disease prevention and worm infections. They also provided soap and deworming medicine to the students. SWAN’s community health workers organized a number of reproductive health awareness workshops in rural communities in Shan State also. More than 1,500 village women attended workshops in Kesi Township, Mong Hsu, Karli Sub-Township and Laikha throughout the year. Topics covered during these workshops included reproductive health, including mother’s health at all stages of the birth cycle, family planning methods and use, abortion and miscarriage, and diarrhoea prevention. SWAN health workers report that village women in their respective catchment areas requested more reproductive health workshops.

Curative Care training for 9 SWAN health workers from Shan State was held over two weeks in July at SWAN’s Chiang Mai offices, with excursions to health centres in the mountains to observe and learn from Hill Tribe health workers. Additionally, two of SWAN’s health workers from Karli Sub-Township undertook four-month long Maternal and Child Health (MCH) training at the Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot, Thailand.
Women's Wellbeing

Crisis Support for Women and Children in Thailand and on the Thai-Shan Border

SWAN's Women's Crisis Support Centres help women and children in desperate need with emergency accommodation and food, medical care support, case work and counselling. For some, including in particular unaccompanied minors, orphans and chronically ill migrants, our dedicated crisis centre staff provide ongoing long-term support for medical care and even with education. SWAN endeavours to link them with other services to provide support where we cannot. Our emergency women's accommodation provides support in many instances where domestic violence is the causal factor in sudden homelessness of a woman and her children. In 2015, the centres housed 69 women and children, most of whom in the Chiang Mai crisis support centre.

Maternal and Child Health

With ongoing armed conflict in Shan State causing internal displacement and other major issues, women's and children's health suffers. SWAN aims to provide quality and reliable medical assistance in remote villages often where there is no other option. The women in villages where we work are supported with pre- and post-natal care, as well as with family planning advice, and health care and nutrition advice for infants and children. Our health workers have noted this year that women have requested more reproductive health workshops in their villages: we are doing all we can to ensure this happens.

The Only Point for Medical Support in Their Villages

SWAN has community health workers based in many villages and servicing other populations living in their vicinity. They are all trained as auxiliary midwives. Since most act as ‘doctors’, we strengthened their capacity in 2015 by providing curative care training by specialists in Family Medicine and Clinical Preventive Medicine, and Public Health. The training also included visiting Hill Tribe health workers in Thailand so they could share experiences and learn from peers.
2. Support for community health interventions targeting Shan refugees and displaced people along the Thai-Shan border, and in northern Thailand (Wiang Haeng and Fang Districts).

In 2015, 1,606 cases were treated at the Koung Jor Health Centre within the Koung Jor Camp for displaced peoples. The most common ailments/conditions among patients presenting at the clinic included: vitamin B1 deficiency, gastritis, hypertension, watery diarrhoea, malnutrition, aches and pains, fevers and cold/flu symptoms. Clinic staff also made home visits to patients with HIV/AIDS, and for other issues.

The Koung Jor health centre staff provide maternal and child health services to local populations, including family planning support and contraception distribution, ANC, delivery, and PNC healthcare services. The SWAN health workers ensure all women who have recently given birth at the hospital receive general health check-ups in the post-natal period, and check on the health of their newborn baby.

The health centre staff also monitored children's nutrition levels on a monthly basis. It was found that the majority of children were well nourished. On average, less than 10% of children were deemed ‘mildly malnourished’ and less than 5% were ‘moderately malnourished’. No children were ‘severely malnourished’. Children suffering from malnutrition were provided with supplementary food. Supplementary food was provided to those in need on average 217 occasions per month. Recipients of the supplementary food included the elderly, new mothers, and children suffering from malnutrition.

They provided counselling support and education to a total of 583 HIV/AIDS patients, delivered either at the HIV/AIDS education centre at Wiang Haeng Hospital, by telephone, or at the patient’s home. SWAN health workers partnered with the hospital in Wiang Haeng where they organised bi-monthly meetings for these patients to have group discussions at the same time as receiving their medication.


SWAN’s Women’s Crisis Support Centres in Chiang Mai and Fang (on the border) assist in emergencies and in cases of extreme need. Importantly, SWAN’s crisis support centres offered emergency accommodation to 69 women and children over the course of the year, the majority being in Chiang Mai. These centres also provide supplementary food to the most needy and impoverished members of displaced/migrant Shan communities in Northern Thailand and baby formula to infants of mothers with HIV. An average of six children and five adults and received food assistance each month in 2015, usually delivered during outreach calls.

In 2015, SWAN’s women’s crisis support centre staff members referred 431 cases to hospitals in Chiang Mai and Fang. Referrals included cancer, broken bones and other injuries, anaemia, HIV/AIDS and polio. Some patients had been involved in car accidents, and some here survivors of domestic violence. The SWAN staff members generally accompany the patients to the hospital and provide translation services, transportation and general support. Furthermore, at Fang Dinstic Hospital, SWAN staff members assisted in 2,727 cases involving migrant/refugee people from Burma - an average of 227 cases per month, offering translation services, blood pressure and weight readings.
Women's Empowerment Program (WEP)

SWAN’s Women’s Empowerment Program seeks to challenge and disrupt entrenched patriarchal systems. Women participants in SWAN's empowerment activities gain the tools and confidence to seek decision-making positions and have their voices heard.

In 2015, SWAN facilitated Women’s Exchanges and Capacity Building Workshops for village women across Burma. Emerging and potential women leaders participated in our Young Women’s and Emerging Women’s Leadership Training programs, and 11 interns were trained at our offices in Chiang Mai and Taunggyi. We organised a successful community event for Stop Violence Against Women Day in Shan State. SWAN also organised women’s literacy training and capacity building workshops across Shan State. Finally, in December, SWAN’s focal points gathered in Taunggyi for the annual alumni exchange workshop. This program relies on the outstanding work of our dedicated team of community focal points, who implemented activities all over Shan State, as well as in Kachin State, Sagaing and Mandalay Regions. SWAN’s staff members and focal points work in communities where gender inequality is often deeply entrenched. It is challenging to shift long-held views about women and their role in society, and often, SWAN members face resistance, particularly from male community leaders.

SWAN views its Young Women’s Leadership Training (YWLT) training program as an effective way to increase the capacity of young Shan women, who in turn, pass on their knowledge to others in their communities. The third Young Women’s Leadership Training was held in 2015, the first to be held inside Shan State. As our aim is to gradually move more of our programming inside Burma, it is a great achievement that we were able to hold this training in Burma for the first time without any major problems.

Ten young women participated in the training which ran for three months from December 2015-February 2016. The YWLT participants were provided with intensive training designed to promote women’s leadership and political awareness. The trainees were schooled in topic areas including gender, human rights, politics, environmental sustainability, community development, advocacy and project management. They also attended classes in computer literacy and English. External guest speakers were invited to address participants on topics related to their area of expertise. The trainees also participated in a number of networking activities, including visits to communities in the Inle Lake region and around Taunggyi.

SWAN’s 3rd Emerging Women’s Leadership Training (EWLT) took place in Chiang Mai from 23 August - 4 September 2015, attended by 15 women. A number of experts in gender, media and Burma’s peace process delivered training on topics including gender and feminism, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Burma’s 2008 constitution, international governance mechanisms, and Burma’s peace process and democratic transition. The trainees learnt important skills including grassroots and international advocacy, data collection and documentation, media advocacy, including documentary making and news collection. The women improved their advocacy skills, which will assist in their work in politics and community based development. SWAN once again received excellent feedback from its Emerging Women’s Leadership Training. Upon completion of the training, the participants spoke about how they are now able to employ a gendered lens in different aspects of their lives. They said that they felt more likely to consider the impact of decisions and actions on women’s lives.

In 2015, ten Women’s Exchanges reached a total of 254 women across Burma. The Women’s Exchanges were organised and facilitated by SWAN’s community focal points, many of whom are graduates of SWAN’s Young Women’s training. Topics addressed included gender equality, gender-based violence and ways to combat discrimination against women, administration skills, community networking and community development, public speaking and women’s leadership, women’s health and voter education.

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SWAN’s focal points each spoke about changes they had seen in the confidence and knowledge level of exchange participants. Often the women that attend these gatherings have never had an opportunity to meet solely with other women to discuss issues that directly affect their lives. Whilst the women are generally shy at the outset as they have seldom been encouraged to be assertive, they build confidence throughout the gathering, and the majority are confident speaking out by the end of the day. Many of the women returned to their villages and shared their new-found experience and knowledge with other members of their communities. The Women’s Exchanges thus prove to be a very cost effective way to help conflict-affected and marginalised women in ethnic areas to empower themselves.
Women's Empowerment

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Nang Khin Htar Yi joined SWAN’s Emerging Women’s Leadership Training in 2013 and says that, although she was already politically active, this training in feminism, empowerment, human rights and networking compelled her to stand in the 2015 election. She is now one of 5 women from her party, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, to have been elected to Shan State Parliament. She spoke to SWAN about the impact EWLT had on her. "I was able to apply the skills I learned from the Emerging Women Leadership Training in my work straight away. Since I returned back from the training, I have been involved in a lot of community work. I was appointed chairperson in my area to conduct the 2015 population census. I have been working with young women, conducting training for them and empowering them. SWAN should run this training in Shan State several times per year," Nang Khin Htar Yi.

IMPROVING LITERACY, EVEN BY TORCHLIGHT

Women are determined to improve their own lives and SWAN supports their determination. Shan and other ethnic languages in Burma are banned from being taught in schools; people grow up not knowing how to write in their own language. Shan uses an entirely different alphabet to Burmese so it’s not just spelling the women that come to WEP’s Literacy Programs are learning. Even if it means using a torch when there is no electricity. SWAN knows how important women’s literacy is as a contribution to individual and group empowerment.

ALREADY YOUNG LEADERS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

Young women in Shan State are supported on their leadership and community organising journey with SWAN’s 3 month long Young Women’s Leadership Training. This creates many unique opportunities for these young women and can propel them into important careers for their communities’ futures. Many alumnae become SWAN Focal Points in their villages and town; organising such events as the important Women’s Exchange Meetings.
SWAN's community focal points organised and facilitated six Capacity Building Workshops for Women from Conflict Areas in 2015: in Lai Kha, Hsipaw, Bamaw, Mandalay and two in Wan Hai, Ke Si Township. These workshops provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion and information sharing on various topics including peace building, democracy and Burma's constitution, human rights, CEDAW and gender equality, and the 2015 elections. SWAN's capacity building workshops all took the promotion of gender equality as their central focus. Women participating in the workshops were introduced to CEDAW as a means for measuring and promoting women's equal status in society. Some of the participants in 2015's capacity building workshops will join SWAN's local teams of community focal points in 2016, and share the skills and knowledge gained from the capacity building workshops with other members of their communities.

SWAN's focal point in Hsipaw organised a community event for Stop Violence Against Women's Day. Community members in the Hsipaw area joined the event and received information and education about gender-based violence through speeches, activities, SWAN newsletters, publications and DVD's. She reported that the event was a success. Notably, government officials were willing to engage in conversation around women's rights and were interested in what SWAN's representatives had to say. The local officials gave a speech to the assembled crowd about the importance of eliminating violence against women. This is a significant improvement in opinions previously held by local officials in regards to events and trainings organised by SWAN, and other women's rights campaigners. Organisers of this event were also pleased to see that attendees represented different the ethnic groups, including Shan, Burmese and Palaung. The event received coverage in local news outlets including Shan Herald Agency for News and New Light of Myanmar.

Capacity Building for Women from Conflict Areas: SWAN organised three workshops for women from conflict areas, focusing on women's capacity building and community mobilisation to oppose exploitative resource extraction projects.

SWAN also hosted Women's Literacy Training for 525 adults (393 female & 132 male) in five areas inside Shan State in 2015. Participants were taught Shan literature, history, dance and song, and participated in training on team work and gender issues. During the two-month literacy training, the facilitators noted great improvements in the women's ability to read and write in Shan. The women felt a sense of connection to their culture and history, as they were able to read folk stories and historical accounts from Shan State. Perhaps the most notable changes were in the women's newly found self-confidence. As the majority of participants at these classes were women, they built strong friendships and supportive networks amongst themselves. The trainers noted that the women even began to challenge their own ideas surrounding women's capabilities and places in society.

SWAN's Internship Program serves as an important organisational capacity building tool and trains the next generation of activists, social workers and community developers. SWAN trained a total of 11 interns in 2015 at its offices in Chiang Mai and Taunggyi; more than in any previous year.

The 5-day Alumni Exchange Meeting took place from 16-20 December in Taunggyi, Shan State. The meeting was attended by 35 women from SWAN's different working areas inside Burma, including in Shan State, Kachin State and Sagaing Region. The meeting was an important opportunity for the women to connect with others undertaking similar work in their various communities to share their experiences, achievements and challenges, to learn from each other, and build supportive networks. Participants had the opportunity to plan their community activities for the coming year. They identified four areas of focus for their trainings: women's education and capacity building, health awareness, women's safety and security, and the effects of drugs on women. Participants in the exchange described their work's challenges, and by the end of the workshop, spoke about how connecting with others facing similar challenges had given them motivation and collective strength. They also said that hearing about the activities implemented by others had given them new ideas and strategies for shifting community attitudes.
Please take a comparative look at how SWAN's funding partners support program activities financially, and how our programs divide up that assistance.

**SWAN INCOME, 2015 (JAN-DEC)**

- Department of International Development (DFID)
- National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
- Humanitarian Action Relief Fund (HART)
- International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA)
- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Planet Wheeler
- Beyond Borders (BB)
- Burma Lifeline (BLL)
- Norwegian Church Action (NCA)
- Burma Relief Centre (BRC)
- Private Donation
- Care for Children

**SWAN SPENDING, 2015 (JAN-DEC)**

- Education Program
- Women’s Empowerment Program
- Women’s Wellbeing Program
- SWAN Centres’ running costs
- Information and Documentation Department
- Emergency Assistance and Other
Thank you to our Partners

SWAN's work has been recognised as best-practice by our funding partners from all over the world. Our gratitude for their support is immeasurable.

In 2015 SWAN's work was valued and supported by our many, generous local and international partners and donors. SWAN would like to take this opportunity to show our sincere gratitude to them; without these supportive organisations, foundations, trusts and individuals we would not be able to serve our communities, and to do so in ways that international agencies and government cannot. We enjoyed many opportunities in 2015 to host our partners to share both challenges and achievements. SWAN is able to provide first-hand information on people’s everyday lives as well as the broader political situations to our funding partners. This is particularly valuable as news from Burma seldom receives detailed coverage in other regions of the world. We recognise that it is due to these partnerships that the work of SWAN can cover so much ground, reach out to so many people, and have such a diversity of evidence based, participatory programming and advocacy. We are therefore hugely grateful for these strong supportive partnerships.

Specifically, our four programming areas were funded by the following partners:

Women’s Empowerment Program:
Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Norway
International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), Australia
Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Bangkok, Thailand

Information and Documentation Department:
Department for International Development (DFID), UK
National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USA
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Bangkok, Thailand

Women's Wellbeing Program:
Humanitarian Action Relief Trust (HART), UK
Burma Relief Centre (BRC), Thailand

Education Program:
Planet Wheeler, Australia
Department for International Development (DFID), UK
Between Borders, Germany
Care for Children, The Netherlands
Burma Relief Centre, Thailand
and other private donors.

As we continue striving for justice and gender equality for Shan State’s women and children we would not only like to thank the partners who fund our programs directly but also the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) who provide funding for the running costs of both our office in Chiang Mai and our much newer communication centre in Taunggyi, Shan State. NED also supports SWAN’s valuable campaigns, consultations and networking activities that utilise these two centres as a base. NED’s long-term partnership allows SWAN to coordinate all of our programming also from these two stable locations and for our staff to have a place to work from that is not only safe but also has the infrastructure necessary to access evidence-based research and to produce high quality materials.

SWAN also wishes to take this opportunity to farewell our biggest funder, the UK’s Department for International Development. Our relationship has been a long and fruitful one and for that we are sincerely grateful. DFID’s generous assistance funded our Education Program for many years and it is due to structural changes inside DFID that our relationship has ended for now. While we have successfully secured 80% of funding necessary for SWAN’s Education Program, we still seek a new partner so that we may continue to deliver vital education services to displaced and conflict-affected children from Burma, and perhaps even expand this programming.

SWAN looks forward to ongoing relationships that strengthen and engender our mission of equality and justice for women and children.

Thank you.
How you can help

Everyone can help SWAN in some way; through the donation of money, goods or time, by funding our programs and projects, or by connecting us to your business's social involvement programs. No matter what your capacity, we want to hear from you.

Financial donations

SWAN is generously supported by various foundations, trusts, organisations and foreign governments but with such a massive drop in our funding since December 2015 we are concerned about the future of some of our programs. You can choose the program you would like to support financially, and of course we are happy to answer any questions you may have about our fundraising and about how potential donations may be spent. You can make financial donations online or via direct debit; email us and we’ll provide our banking details.

Email: kenneri@shanwomen.org
Website: www.shanwomen.org

Volunteering

SWAN's staff in Chiang Mai, in the border region and in Shan State are all highly skilled. Sometimes we will need help in specific areas such as legal, medical or development. We will advertise for more general volunteers however you could also send us a detailed Expression of Interest (EOI) if you would like to be part of our efforts to work towards gender equality and justice for Shan women. We are very welcoming of offers of assistance in expert training for any of our staff to build their capacity. We are always seeking legal experts to assist with our ongoing struggle for justice for survivors of sexual assault and other violence against women in Burma and in Thailand. Contact our new HR Department by attentioning your emails directly to them.

Email: kenneri@shanwomen.org

Medical equipment and supplies, and other donations

We accept quality, sterile and new medical and first aid materials and equipment to our clinics on the border and to our health workers within Shan State.

Good quality clothes and items of use such as sanitary napkins can be donated by post also and will be used at our Women's Crisis Centres and donated to IDP and refugee camps on the border, and to our boarding house for children of migrant worker parents. In all these situations women and children arrive with little left of their personal effects as they have usually had to flee from danger or fighting and unrest in their villages.

Post: PO Box 120, Phrasing Post Office Chiang Mai 50205 THAILAND

Bequests

If you admire the values and work of the Shan Women's Action Network, we encourage you to give serious thought to including a gift to SWAN in your will. To discuss how to leave a lasting legacy contact our Management Team and Finance Officer on:

Email: kenneri@shanwomen.com

To support our advocacy campaigns please join us on Facebook's Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and @Shanwomen on Twitter
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ANNUAL REPORT 2015

SWAN
Shan Women's Action Network
PO Box 120,
Phrasing Post Office
Chiang Mai 50205
THAILAND

Email: kenneri@shanwomen.org

Website: www.shanwomen.org

Editing & Graphic Design: Natalie Keene (natalie.keene@gmail.com), SWAN Volunteer Communications Officer, 2016