



We women realize social change together

Emerging Women of Burma: Support Change, Develop Leaders

Project Summary

We women is profiling **emerging women leaders of Burma**, the difficulties they face and how they overcome them to access education, develop a career, give back to the community and become part of the decision-making process in Burma. The accompanying documentary highlights the challenging work of these women, **emphasizes the benefits of supporting women to gain access to education** and hopefully will inspire other young women in Burma to become leaders and work for their communities.

Funding Amount

\$10,000

What is the problem?

Over 50 years of military dictatorship have resulted in a once strong education system falling into total disrepair. The country with the highest level of literacy in Asia was recently described as “like a beautiful forest after it has been napalmed..... the generals were incredibly effective in wiping out higher education” Even now, with the hopeful rise of a fragile democracy, individual freedom remains a distant dream for many.

In both the cities and in rural areas, there is a greater likelihood that parents will keep their boys in school and take the girls out. Family members do not support daughters going to school if there is limited funding, and consequently, the faulty educational system leads to the deepening of differences between genders, consolidating inequality within the society.

Additionally, women have to gain higher marks than men to be offered a place at a tertiary institution and then are still not able to choose their area of study. Women from ethnic minorities in the rural areas have even less chance to study what they like, as ethnicity also affects their opportunities to access universities.

Most women from Burma feel impassioned and motivated to take part in the struggle to gain human rights for their people. However, they feel that without education they are pushed back into traditional roles that do not allow them the freedom and mobility to contribute to this struggle.

Within this context we follow Burmese women in their struggle to become leaders in their communities.

The We Women foundation supports women from Burma to gain an education and a career. **To help us get our work into the spotlight and bring the struggle of so many women from Burma to the attention of a broader audience, *We Women* is highlighting the emerging women leaders of Burma – those whose passion and work has benefited their community, who have overcome obstacles and risked their personal safety to achieve outstanding results, but who largely remain unacknowledged outside their own community.**

To profile this, *We women* is completing a short documentary in which we portray the many difficulties the women of Burma face and how some of them have overcome these to access education, to develop a career, to put back into the community and become part of the decision-making processes in Burma. Higher education enables graduates to educate their own people, guarantees sustainability, reaches many generations of people and decreases the dependence on aid given by outsiders. Higher education gives women the opportunity and status to work in influential positions on Human Rights and Women Rights. ***We women* is the only organization that focuses exclusively on higher education specifically for women from Burma.**

This documentary will form the core of an awareness raising campaign to raise funds to help *We women* to continue empowering women from Burma through education so that women might make and influence the policy decisions ***within their own communities***. Most importantly, we assist women who are ***fully committed to using their education to improve the lives of the people of Burma***.

How will this project solve the problem?

The documentary will be promoted online and to the media. It is anticipated that the documentary will be used to emphasize the benefits of supporting women to gain access to education, and also to garner financial support for the work of the women featured. *We women* will not only utilize the video footage to raise the profile of the women and highlight their work but also to seek funding to continue our own organisation's work in providing higher education scholarships to women from Burma.

There is a saying in the developing world: "educate a woman and you feed a village". Educating women is one of the key strategies for the eradication of disease and poverty in the developing world. As former Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan observed: "There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and women."

Recent reports from the World Bank, World Economic Forum, and the OECD point to the key economic role played by women as they become more productive citizens through education. There is a multiplier effect to educating girls and women: more educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better health care and education to their children, all of which eventually improves

the well-being of all individuals and can lift households out of poverty. These benefits also transmit across generations, as well as to communities at large.

Educated women contribute to the quality, size, and productivity of the workforce. They can get better paying jobs, allowing them to provide daily necessities, health care, and education to support the family. Investments in female education can yield a “growth premium” in GDP trends and narrowing the gender gap in employment can boost per capita income.

Perhaps more importantly, educated women are better at managing their own and their family’s health issues, thereby reducing infant and maternal mortality, and health-care costs and improving demographic structures.

Potential Long-Term Impact

The campaign will raise the profile of the work of the emerging women leaders in Burma and by doing so will assist the projects they are developing. However the overarching long-term aim is to impact on the access to education of women in Burma. The more women who are given access to an education, the more likely that women will be able to participate meaningfully in the changes that are occurring in Burma, to have a voice and to be heard.