**Online fundraising campaign 2019: Because She is a Leader**

Our aim is to raise a total of € 6,000 (equivalent to US$ 7,100) to continue our work in Myanmar and The Netherlands.

1. **About Us**

The We women foundation was established in December 2009 in order to assist women in marginalized ethnic communities in Myanmar.

**Leadership is key in all our projects**. Our personal approach is our strength; this includes having a close relationship with the women we work with so they can become successful leaders. In 2019, we have started the pilot project: “inner leadership & career coaching” to assist refugee and migrant women in the Netherlands realize their dreams.

We are a small organization based in the Netherlands that consists of one employee and a dedicated volunteer team. We also have an office in Myanmar that is run by our alumnus, Num Aye, who leads a team of two employees and many local volunteers. Furthermore, we have an internationally diverse network of volunteers that support our cause globally.

Our foundation’s main goal is to attain critical mass by assisting women in Myanmar and the refugee and migrant community in the Netherlands to raise their voices and be heard. These women are currently underrepresented in leadership positions.

Our foundation selects women who are committed to ensuring positive transformations of their communities. Before joining our projects, the selected individuals would have demonstrated the work they have done for their communities such as organizing relevant events and gatherings. Hence, these women could be labeled as “emerging leaders”, whom can grow socially and professionally with the support of the We women foundation. These women will work in different sectors such as, education, health, civil society, business or politics and will become influencers of societal transformation on regional and/or national level.

We consider education to be a tool of empowerment, which is essential for women to achieve their goals and aspirations in order to reduce the gender gap. The United Nations (UN) recognizes education for girls and women as a global priority, and the We women foundation is dedicated into turning that into a reality for marginalized women around the world.

**Leadership is key in all our projects**. This empowerment gives women a voice to actively contribute in key decision-making processes that involve gender, ethnic minority, refugee and migrant issues and thus serve as a catalyst of positive social change in their communities.

1. **Activities**

We women provides three leadership network projects in Myanmar, which are in Taunggyi, Pyay and Yangon. The foundation also offers scholarships to students in Myanmar and leadership coaching session to women in Myanmar and the Netherlands.

**Projects:**

Currently, We women Myanmar and We women International provide three projects:

**We women Inner leadership & Career Coaching: Transforming trauma into power**

Gender inequality contributes to women having low self-esteem. This in turn can slow down, discourage, or stop an individual’s personal and inner development. Hence, we believe that leadership coaching is necessary to believe in oneself and to feed inner strengths*.*

The coaching gives an insight into traumas and subconscious patterns and transforms these into personal strengths. It also examines life experiences, future dreams and career aims. Hence, coaching requires writing out a personal development plan to assist women in their journey towards making their dreams a reality.

The main goal of coaching is to help women become aware of their role in society and strengthen their transformation process, which will assist them into becoming self-confident leaders. This project is currently taking place in the Netherlands and Myanmar.

*The inner leadership & career coaching is given to emerging women leaders who are committed towards bringing social change and transformation.*

**Women Leadership Network; Inspiring cross-pollination beyond borders**

Aiming to inspire upcoming women leaders to take action, the Women Leadership Network seeks to create multi-disciplined women’s networks in the ethnic areas of Myanmar and connect them on a national level.

*The leadership networks meetings are attended by emerging women leaders, who will in turn train other women to develop into leaders in their local communities. Working on gender equality is a key factor in this project.*

**We women Scholarship Fund; Educate One, Empower Thousands**

By providing access to academic education and opportunities for professional development, we support aspiring young women by assisting them gain access to key positions within policy-making and influential organizations. Minority women from Myanmar can apply for this fund.

*The scholarships are provided to women who, after their studies abroad is completed, wish to return to their region and use their acquired skills and knowledge to create positive change and bring social reforms in their community on a regional and/or national level.*

***The focus of this campaign is to provide the Inner Leadership & Career Coaching sessions to women in the Netherlands and Myanmar.***

**Achievements:**

To date,We women foundation has achieved the following results:

**45** women attended our former university preparation projects

**16** women have received a scholarship. One of our alumni is now running We Women’s office in Myanmar, and 90 % of the alumni are now in positions where they can help influence their communities.

**20** women received In-university coaching

**11** women have received business training

**16** women and men have participated in We women’s gender dialogue project

**64** women received Inner Leadership & Career Coaching

**426** women attended the Women Leadership Network

1. **Situation**

Since 2019, We Women Myanmar is an independent organization that is still working very closely with the We Women International based in the Netherlands.

We Women Myanmar is now in charge of its own projects and staff. Additionally, the We Women International has started its first project *“Inner Leadership and Career Coaching”* in the Netherlands.

We are currently raising funds for Women Leadership Development and in specific for the *“Inner Leadership and Career Coaching”* project. The funds raised in this campaign will be divided equally between our projects in Myanmar and The Netherlands.

Our Foundation has always worked with minority women. Currently, we have our target groups in Myanmar and the Netherlands.

We work with three groups of women in Myanmar:

1. Refugee and migrant women from ethnic areas who fled the dictatorship rule to Thailand and went back to Myanmar from 2012 onwards;
2. Women from minority groups living in Yangon who often have left their rural hometowns to provide for their families and work for their community;
3. Women in the ethnic areas.

We work with one group of women in the Netherlands:

Refugee and migrant women. We have started working with Syrian refugees and migrants, and will enlarge the target group when more funding is available.

**Myanmar contextual background**

Traditionally women have subordinate roles in Myanmar, which often makes it hard for them to be active agents of change in their society. This situation is even harder for women that come from ethnic minorities, as their access to education and work opportunities have been extremely limited throughout Burma’s post-colonial history. This showcases how Burma/ Myanmar’s minority groups have been severely oppressed, as they were prohibited from expressing their ethnic identities. Despite the current reforms of the new government, human right abuses are still being committed against ethnic minority groups.

Myanmar once had a strong educational system and an impressive intellectual heritage, which was seen as one of the best in Southeast Asia. However, decades of dictatorship created an educational system that was used for political purposes. Due to that, all schools were nationalized and universities across the country were closed.

The political tensions regarding ethnic minorities combined with the gender inequality that plagues the country makes it extremely difficult for women to attain higher education and serve their communities as qualified leaders.

Myanmar is in the process of shifting towards a more “democratic” political system. In recent years, Myanmar has seen a lot of news coverage in the west. It started out positively with the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, holding the first elections in decades, and lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the west. However, there has also been a lot of critique regarding the current governments’ policies and decisions. This includes the persecution of the Rohingya people, civil war in ethnic areas, repression of ethnic people and undemocratic practices leading to all kinds of inequalities.

Myanmar is facing many challenges and its democratic system is fragile. Thus, it is a critical time to keep on fighting for human rights there. This is a time where women finally have more option to actively participate in changing Myanmar’s society for the better.

**Refugee and Migrant women contextual background**

*“An unprecedented 68.5 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.4 million refugees. Nearly 1 person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Refugee and migrant women are underrepresented on every level, which makes it harder for them to voice their concerns and needs. They have little access to education and continuously deal with gender related cultural stereotypes. Generally, there is a lack of funding for programs targeting these issues.

*“Training in leadership skills, advocacy, human rights law, formal meeting procedure and public speaking is needed to enhance their participation. Without this support, the participation of women and girls in decision making processes can be tokenistic if they are not able to participate effectively. Most importantly, the pendulum swing to focus on the strengths and abilities of refugee women and girls without recognizing the barriers that create minority status and vulnerability is equally dangerous.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

In the Netherlands,research has shown that one of the explanatory factors for lower rates of refugees in the labour market is the long-term exclusion of their participation in society. This is due to the waiting period they have to go through until their status is finalized or until they have mastered the Dutch language. This exclusion has negative consequences for both the refugees and society at large. The lower rate of refugees’ participation in the labour market can cause loneliness, depression and other mental health problems.

There is a need for strengthening refugee women’s position through education and leadership programs to ensure their participation in the labour market. Many women do not want to wait and be excluded from Dutch society, instead they want to use their talents and skills so they can play a vital role in integrating other refugees and help solve issues that involves their communities on a larger scale.

1. **Mission**

It is our mission to unleash the potential of minority women and assist them to become productive members of society. Hence, we need to ensure that these women are economically, socially and politically empowered by providing them with appropriate tools to become leaders.

The women of We women, they are us. They are co-creators of the evolving organization itself. Our personal approach is our strength. We Women leaders will work in the development, education, environment, law, politics, and the health sector. They will also be representatives in national political parties. Our main mission is to create leaders who inspire, teach and help others.

1. **Why donate?**

The benefits of educating women and supporting their journey towards leadership are endless. This could be key to solving some of the huge problems we are facing in our societies nowadays.

We believe that women’s education is the world’s best investment that has many returns. It doesn’t only lead to economic growth but also has positive impact in many places around the world leading to reduced rates of infant mortality, maternal mortality and child marriage. Education also improves the health of women and children, enhances social status and leads to gender equality.

Providing girls with a quality education empowers and prepares them for roles that go beyond the traditional roles of homemaker, mother and wife, which can be beneficial for the whole community.

And that's why we are imploring you to understand that the most effective way to make changes in the world is to invest in women. Because, while they are rarely recognized, they are the agents of change we need. Teaching women has an intergenerational effect, because if you teach one woman, the benefits will reach the whole society.

1. Source: UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/59e5f4447.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)