



Imagine... being born in a country that is oppressed by a **military dictatorship**.

Imagine... going to sleep **hungry** and living in **constant fear**, because you never know what will happen next.

Imagine... being **separated** from your parents, because they have to work on a farm far from home to be able to provide for you.

Imagine... going to school in a system that was designed to prepare you for a **life of oppression**, where speaking freely about your ideas is an **illusion**.

Imagine... the the **despair** that comes with fleeing from **dangers so violent** that your life is no longer secure.

And then imagine... having **hopes** and **dreams** for a better tomorrow...

Nang Mo doesn't need to imagine, because for her this is the reality of her life. She was separated from her parents at the age of three. She had to flee, because her family was facing serious dangers. Nang Mo ended up in an IDP camp along the Thai-Burma border, but she maintained the hope and the dream of a stable country for her people.

Being the strong and ambitious woman that she is, and with the help and dedication of her family, Nang Mo finished a Bachelor's degree in Myanmar. She managed to find a job in education in the IDP camps but was confronted with a total lack of infrastructure and resources mean that the education system in the camp was completely underdeveloped. To help improve this situation she decided she wanted to learn more about how to organise and run education systems and so, with the support of We women, she fought hard to get a Masters degree in Education Administration.

This document gives you an overview of the way in which We women helps women like Nang Mo.

### **We women Myanmar**

Vision: At We women Myanmar we believe in equal opportunities for everyone, irrespective of gender or ethnicity, culture, education and religious believes.

Mission: To assist ambitious women who are working towards an equal society, with the ultimate goal of an established, self empowered and influential community of women leaders.

*"I strongly believe my country needs more social and capacity building services to ease the suffering of victims of natural disasters, and those affected by the political, economic and educational crises that have lasted for decades. As I am a victim of these crises myself, I am committed to rebuilding capacity and leadership skills among our people in order to help them take action on their community issues."*

***Khaing May Oo, We women student***



## **We women dreams**

We women aspires to create a nation where ethnic minority women are equal participants in, and beneficiaries of, economic, social and political development in the fledgling, unstable democratic state of Myanmar. Ethnic minority women will be involved at every level in shaping institutions, policies and values.

In recent years, Myanmar has seen a lot of news coverage in the west. It started out quite positive with the first elections in decades, the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the lifting of economic sanctions by the west. But since the flares of violence in Rakhine State and the persecution of the

Rohingya people, the world is starting to understand that the democracy in Myanmar is still extremely fragile and human rights are far from secured.

We women believes that educating women will lead to a more stable country where the rights of all citizens are protected. Being a traditional society, women in Myanmar have far less opportunities for personal and professional growth than men. By assisting these women to grow into positions of leadership, We women enables them to empower their communities and country on their own terms.

*“Even though I was able to attend school and I graduated with my Bachelor degree in 2002, the education system in Burma is very biased. Students who graduate from rural high schools cannot study majors such as medicine and engineering. In addition, female students must receive higher marks than boys in order to enter those majors. As a rural woman, I had no opportunities to study these majors. I could only study botany, which is the lowest major in Burma”*

**Hearn, We women graduate**

## **We women are**

We women Myanmar is a grassroots organisation based in Yangon with a sister organization in the Netherlands; *We women foundation*. We women Myanmar originated from the long lasting wish of the We women foundation to handover control of its projects to local women.

- 2009: The We women foundation is registered in the Netherlands.
- 2010: Start of the *We women from Burma program*, providing academic opportunities to refugee women in Thailand.
- 2011: Transition towards democracy begins. We women starts to research the needs of women inside Myanmar.
- 2012: The first We women project in an ethnic minority area of Myanmar Begins.
- 2013: The first alumni from the We women from Burma program move from Thailand back to Myanmar and become involved in the emerging civil society.
- 2014: We women and all its projects begin to move from Thailand to Myanmar
- 2015: We women graduate becomes Myanmar Country Director and continues the work of the We women from Burma program. Start of Women's Leadership network.
- 2016: Launch of the *Women Agents of Change* project, The Women Leadership Network expands.
- 2017: We women Myanmar decides to establish itself as an independent organisation separate from the Dutch Foundation.



## ***We women does***

We women supports extraordinary women who understand the deeply complex and diverse needs of their community. We support them in realising the potential they have to change their lives, their families' lives, the lives of people in their communities and ultimately to guide Myanmar through these first tentative steps on its journey to become a fully fledged democracy.

To achieve its mission, We women works with ethnic minority women leaders (and potential leaders) to offer a carefully honed mosaic of educational and leadership interventions, driven and developed by and for our participants:

- **Leadership Academy**

### **Education to strengthen women's roles and voices**

For decades the military dictatorship decimated the education system in Myanmar in order to keep citizens in their place and quash any rebellion. As a result the country is now facing an enormous shortage of empowered women leaders on every level, from teachers to policy makers. Our research has shown that women name a lack of higher level education and qualifications as the biggest challenge for them in making their voices heard. Therefore, We women is implementing a number of education projects for emerging leaders to gain access to different education institutes:

- 1) Intermediate and high level English classes and tutoring,
- 2) Critical thinking and academic writing,
- 3) Career and leadership coaching,
- 4) Student support trouble-shooting (application processes, finances, visa issues)

In the future, We women Myanmar and the *We women foundation* will collaborate to provide as many of the participating women with scholarships to go to university. Throughout their education, these women will receive financially support, career coaching and practical guidance.

*“At an early age, I was bored with my studies, because I believe the Burmese educational system did not challenge me and enable me to develop critical thinking skills. I remember spending long hours memorising paragraphs from text books only to rehearse it in front of my teacher the next day.”*

***Pao Hom, We women graduate***

- **Women Agents of Change**

### **Enabling all women to realise their social and economic potential**

Women Agents of Change is an accessible program that targets women entrepreneurs who have the potential to become leaders in business. We women seeks to support women to establish sustainable enterprises with a strong corporate social responsibility. We believe that more women-led businesses in rural areas will become a driving force for economic and social development in Myanmar's outer provinces.



To this end, We women has developed three training modules and trains local partners to give the training:

- 1) Business plan & strategy development and market research,
- 2) Profitability training, financial health and financial administration,
- 3) Scaling up a business (legalities, regulations and sustainable growth).

In each module there is special attention given to the challenges that women entrepreneurs encounter, and issues of corporate social responsibilities.

In the future, We women Myanmar and their local partners will provide as many social entrepreneurs as possible with grants to start-up or grow their social businesses.

- **Women Leadership Network**

**Encouraging and supporting strong and resilient women leaders**

Addressing the tensions and building bridges between the many ethnic groups of Myanmar, the Women Leadership Network brings together women leaders from different backgrounds, both ethnic and professionally. By providing these women with structures that enable them to collaborate and support each other, a critical mass of women leaders will be formed.

In monthly meetings, women with backgrounds in academics, politics, business and civil society meet to discuss a self selected topics. A guest speaker introduces the topic and leads the discussion. Importantly, the women get the opportunity to network informally as part of the session. The outcomes of the discussion is shared more widely amongst the We women network.

We women plans to scale up the Women Leadership Network and hold regular meetings in provinces across the country. These meetings would be supported by online and mobile applications. Each year an annual We women conference would be organised to bring together the learning from across the country, influence policy decisions and further support women in their leadership roles.

***We women achieves***

**Educate one empower thousands**

Over the past years, We women has reached many women throughout Myanmar and in the refugee communities in Thailand. Please see below an overview of the numbers:

<p><i>We women from Burma program</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>University preparation project: 45</i></li> <li>• <i>Scholarship project: 16</i></li> <li>• <i>In-university support: 20</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Gender Dialogues project</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gender Awareness training: 16</i></li> <li>• <i>Training-of-trainers: 2</i></li> </ul>
<p>Women Agents of Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SME business training: 11</li> <li>• Training-of-trainers: 3</li> </ul>	<p>Women Leadership Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local chapters: 2</li> <li>• Monthly meetings: 28</li> <li>• Total attendees: 236</li> </ul>



At We women, we place great value on the individuality of women. We believe the stories of the women we work with are more convincing than any set of numbers. Meet three of our alumni, who have utilised their education to make Myanmar a safer place for everyone:

**Nang Mo**, the strong woman whose history we used to introduce this document, returned to the IDP camps along the Thai-Burma border armed with her Masters Degree in Education Administration. One of her great accomplishments is that she introduced and organised high school education in all five of the IDP camps, making education available to thousands of teenagers now and in the future. She also trains teachers in different, effective teaching methods, aiming to contribute to a non-biased education system in Myanmar. Here you can see how through supporting one woman to achieve a higher level of education, the education level of thousands of women is raised.

**Hearn**, studied Health Economics with the support of We women. Even before she graduated, she already organised a major research project in the forbidden areas of Shan State, Myanmar. As part of this project she trained dozens of healthcare workers in reproductive health methods, bringing a much needed service to thousands of women from Myanmar's most inaccessible communities. Now she is the Director of a well established ethnic women grassroots organization. Hearn leads major programs on women's rights, health education and advocacy, assisting thousands of women annually. Again the important We women multiplier effect has the power to improve lives and change communities for the better.

**Pao Hom** studied Education Administration with We women's support and became part of a think tank that advises the Myanmar government on policy development. As the only young woman between middle aged men, her input is invaluable for the Women of Myanmar. While involved in the 2015 peace talks, she made sure that Women's Rights were added to the agenda and women's voices were heard.

As you can see, the indirect impact of We women's work extends beyond the women whom we directly support. Running discreet, highly targeted and specifically tailored programmes to individual women, creates a 'pebble in a pond' ripple effect that has an impact on thousands of lives over many years. Therefore, the small scale of our work is a conscious choice.

*"I train teachers to develop better curriculums and I educate them on school management, therefore they gain the skills to improve the education system within Burma. They are also able to pass these skills on to new teachers and new school managers. Therefore many people will profit from the knowledge I have gained through the university."*

**Nang Mo, We women graduate**



### ***We women needs***

Your support *will* change lives. Educating and empowering one woman has a ripple effect across thousands of lives. By choosing to support We women Myanmar in its activities you are having a direct impact on the lives of the women receiving the support, on their families, their communities and ultimately on Myanmar as a whole as these women rise to prominence within civil society and business.

Help us support these extraordinary women rebuild their country, and together we will make Myanmar the pearl of southeast Asia once again.

We simply cannot do our important work without our supporters. By making a monthly, yearly or one off donation, you provide the security and stability that is of vital importance to our young organisation. To demonstrate the impact of your support please see examples of what your donation could support:

- €20 per month could make it possible for two women per month to attend the Women's Leadership network.
- €40 per month could help us to scale up the Women's Leadership network to a new province
- €85 per month could support five brave women entrepreneurs to attend the Women Agents of Change training course
- A one-off donation of € 2000 could support ten brave women entrepreneurs to attend the Women Agents of Change training course
- A one off donation of €2500 could fund a local chapter of the Women Leadership Network for one year
- A one-off donation of €3500 could give a start-up grant to a women-led business:
- A one-off donation of €6000 could provide one upcoming woman leader with an academic scholarship for one year of study.

We also welcome corporate donations. From 2019 onwards, we will organise an annual We women Conference in Myanmar. If your company decides to become a sponsor in this event, this will be communicated in all public promotion. Contact us for more information

### ***You are We women***

We have said it before and we will say it again; We women is nowhere without you. If it wasn't for the supporters that have donated to our cause over the past years, we could not have helped **Nang Mo** through university. We women Myanmar would still be nothing more than a dream. She would not be building her own organisation and fighting to provide other women with the same opportunities that have brought her so much.

We hope we have made you understand how even small donations can have a great impact. Donate today, become a supporter and we will keep you informed about the social impact of your contribution to social change.

For more information, have a look at our [Facebook](#) page and watch this [video](#).