

We women foundation

Annual Report 2012



Preface

Dear reader,

What a turbulent, energetic and beautiful year 2012 has been. Together with students, volunteers, staff and donors, we worked hard to accomplish the goals of our strong women. I continue to see the tireless efforts of our students. Even when they are faced with difficult situations, they remain optimistic, hopeful and full of vitality. This is the most beautiful thing I see in my work every day. I feel privileged to coach women that radiate so much power. Myu Nan, for instance; she's one of the most talented women participating in our pre-university program. Last year, she faced many setbacks and lost confidence about ever reaching her goals. The insecurities she was struggling with were all related to her idea that she could never get her academic English up to the level required by universities. After a short break, she managed to reformulate her personal and academic goals. The coaching sessions we had, she tells me, gave her the insight and inspiration to continue going forward and keep developing. You should know that Myu Nan is an intellectual and hard working student and that if it were up to me, she would have been accepted into university on the day I met her. Next to preparing herself for an academic education, she continues her work for unrecognized refugees from Burma. I'm very pleased Myu Nan is on the right track again, but I never expected her break to last long. Breaks and setbacks never last very long for women like her. They dare to keep dreaming and work hard to realize their dreams. These are the women we, with your help, keep on supporting.

A good example of what our in-university students are accomplishing, is the story of Nang Hseng. Currently, she is working on a research project in Burma of a magnitude most university students would shy away from. With the support from *We women*, a local NGO and her university, she is collecting data concerning reproductive healthcare in the rural areas of Burma. In addition, she is training healthcare practitioners in the basics of reproductive health. Through this project, she and seven research assistants will reach an area of approximately 4000 people. Especially the fact that she started this project on her own initiative, makes Nang Hseng a great inspiration for me. As is Nang Mo, of course, our first graduate. A fine young woman that is working hard to improve the curriculum of the school in five IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps. I'm very proud of her, because she is rocking the education system in the camp and educating teachers in different teaching methods. Nang Mo is a fine example (the last one) of a woman who is fighting for a better future for generations of children from Burma.

The only possible conclusion is that 2012 was a fantastic year; full of surprises and many people joining their incredible forces. I would like to thank our volunteers, because without them our projects could have never grown into what they are today. I would also like to thank all donors, who have given generously and without hesitation. It is their contributions that make it possible for women like Myu Nan, Nang Hseng and Nang Mo to go to university and become the leaders that they are. I cannot express the love I feel for all the people I have met throughout the past year, people that made small and large contributions to the work of *We women*. With great anticipation I look toward the future and feel confident I will find and receive the same amount of inspiration as over the past year. I ask everyone to continue to help us, for we will need your support again in 2013.

Ursula Cats
Executive director

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Introduction

Still going strong, three years and counting

As 2012 was the third year of *We women's* existence, we are pleased to announce that we have continued to extend our program portfolio and have catered to the needs of a larger number of ambitious women from Burma than in previous years. Existing programs are still running, programs that were just plans have reached the implementation phase and plans for new programs are being developed. This document will paint a clear picture of all the activities undertaken by our organization over the past year.

As in 2011, the *We women from Burma project* has expanded. Especially the number of women studying with a *We women* scholarship has increased. Throughout the year, fourteen women went to university with the assistance of our foundation. Five of those women received a second year scholarship and nine women were added to the pool of university students with a first year scholarship. We also continued our efforts to assist women with their preparation for university. The number of participants in our pre-university program was at its maximum in 2011, but as several women progressed into the in-university program, new students were admitted at the beginning of the year. Our internship program has also begun to take shape in 2012, as the first students were placed in internships through the *We women foundation*. As the number of in-university students is rising, more women will be placed in internships in 2013.

Next to expanding and running the programs that are part of the *We women from Burma project*, we have put considerable time and energy into the development of a gender program. Throughout 2012, we realised a considerable amount of research and networking in order to assess the willingness of our environment to actively participate in such a program and what such a program should entail. Although we did not find the opportunity to implement the pilot of our gender program in 2012, the outline and content of the program have taken shape and we will report on the plans that we have drafted for its implementation in this document.

Reaping the fruits of three years of hard work – our first success story

Looking back at 2012, one event stands out amongst all others. It is with great pride that we report that the first *We women* scholarship student finished all her academic course work and has graduated from Ramkhamhaeng University with a Master's degree in Educational Administration. Nang Mo is living proof of what ambitious women from Burma can accomplish when empowered with scholarships, tutoring and coaching. She has been part of our program since the beginning and it was very inspiring for our staff and volunteers to see her succeed. But her success story does not end with her graduation; Nang Mo has the ambition to reform the educational systems in the rural areas of Burma and is taking strides in doing so.

Her thesis research explored how to best organize and apply educational systems in schools in the IDP camps along the Thai-Burma border. The results showed that there are several improvements to be made in the way schools are organized and in the teaching methods applied by teachers. Through her course work at university, Nang Mo gathered the necessary knowledge and expertise to apply for funding to continue her work in the schools in the IDP camps. After receiving five separate grants, she is now conducting follow-up research and, at the same time, training teachers in how to apply different teaching methods effectively.

We are very pleased to see that Nang Mo found ways to apply her academic knowledge in a practical environment immediately after her graduation. The path she is on is exactly how we envisioned it when we started out with the *We women from Burma project*. The women that enter

our program are expected to apply their newly acquired knowledge to improve the situation of the people from Burma. We are convinced that Nang Mo will make important contributions to the reform of the educational system in Burma and emerge as an effective advocate for the right to quality education for all people from Burma. She has set the bar and she has set it high, but we have no doubt that the three students scheduled to graduate in 2013 will match her success.

Mapping the future by keeping track of developments in Burma

In our 2011 annual report we reflected upon the changes that were taking place in Burma at the time and a lot has happened since. All around the world, Burma has been in the news a lot over the past year. The tone of news items differs greatly and they have both positive and negative stories to tell. Visiting foreign investors and government officials generate a positive sound. Aung San Suu Kyi and the new government are celebrated for working together and taking steps toward democracy and rebuilding the country's economy. On the other hand, the flare-up in the armed conflict in Kachin State and persecution of the Rohingyas in Rakhine State cast a shadow over the positive stories. It can be concluded that the country is in flux and both in-country and abroad people are interested to see in which direction the country will be moving over the next few years.

As the reforms in Burma continue to unfold, people belonging to the migrant communities in Thailand pay close attention to the many news stories, reports and rumours emerging from their home country. While some INGO's and grassroots organizations are choosing to move their programs to the "other side of the border", people themselves wonder if it is safe enough to return already. *We women* has been wondering if it should open its program to women from Burma and start actively recruiting participants in Yangon and the rural areas. To answer this question, a considerable amount of time and effort was put towards researching needs of women in Burma over the past year. The findings of this research will form the basis for programs *We women* will be developing and implementing in Burma in the future.

The organisation

Vision and mission

The *We women foundation* strives for equality for different groups of people in the world. *We women* helps women, refugees, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups with their questions and problems. We give people the space to formulate their own needs, without forcing our thoughts and beliefs upon them. Academic research is the first step of this process, as it creates insight into local beliefs, customs and aspirations. *We women* is committed to personal growth, social inclusion, (mental) health, education and encouraging creative initiatives, with the ultimate goal: equality for all.

In 2012, the vision and mission of our organization remained the same as they have been since the founding of the organization. We continued to support the drive for equality for various groups of people in the world, focusing on providing opportunities to attend higher education to women from Burma who are living in Northern Thailand.

Working methods

All organizational activities contribute to the realisation of well-built programs that address the needs of our target group. As described in our mission statement, academic research is the basis of the work of the organization. Not only during the start-up phase of projects, but also thereafter. Ongoing research into the connection of the programs to the needs of the target group ensures that *We women* remains a critical organization that actively reflects on her own work. Besides research into the needs of the target group, *We women* also constantly looks at what programs other organizations in the field offer. By comparing this data to the needs of our target group, it becomes visible if there are any gaps to fill. In this way it is ensured that *We women* is active only in those places where it is most needed.

To create the perfect conditions for realising our work, *We women* also focuses on raising awareness of the issues that concern our organization. We might now be well acquainted with the needs of our target group ourselves, but this is obviously not the case for everyone. For the realisation of our programs, *We women* depends on the support of partner organizations, donors and volunteers. Awareness of the urgency of our work amongst these actors is fundamental to be able to make proper requests for support.

Organizational structure

All activities of our organisation are supervised by the board of the foundation. The composition of the board has remained the same since the foundation was established in 2009. The board consists of:

1. Ms Ursula Cats (chairman)
2. Ms Caroline Seagle (vice-chairman)
3. Ms Nadia Moussaïd (secretary)
4. Ms Kieja Janssen (treasurer)

All of the organisation's activities are managed by the executive director: Ms Ursula Cats. In managing the *We women from Burma project*, the executive director is advised by an advisory board. This advisory board consists of four renowned women from Burma. As these women are active in a climate that is highly politically sensitive and wish to remain anonymous, their names are not published in this public document. No changes have occurred in the composition of the advisory board over 2012.

The organisation's activities are realized by a team of employees and volunteers, supervised by the executive director. Since last year, the number of salaried positions has increased from three to seven. Next to the executive director, the administrative employee and the program coordinator, which were the salaried positions at the beginning of 2012, another program coordinator, a fundraising and communications coordinator, a TOEFL-teacher and a general manager have been added to the paid staff.

The staff of the organization was supported by a number of volunteers throughout the year. Their level of involvement differs greatly; some have already been active for several years on a continuous basis, while others take on tasks for just one day. The activities they perform are, among other things, tutoring students in academic English, organising benefit events and realising tasks in the field of communications and fundraising. Our volunteers are from various parts of the world, and mostly perform their tasks in the Netherlands and/or Chiang Mai. In 2012, the number of volunteers decreased slightly compared to 2011.

Partner organizations

Since 2010, the *We women foundation* has been working together with two other organisations that provide migrants and refugees from Burma with opportunities for higher education. For reasons of security, one of these organisations does not wish to be named here. The other organisation is called BEAM (*Bridging Educational Access to Migrants*). The cooperation with these organisations is aimed primarily at joining forces and expertise, with the goal of optimising the impact of our work. In 2012, this cooperation consisted mainly of exchanging expertise and jointly providing an academic English class to our students. In addition, *We women* and BEAM cooperated in a study of the needs of our target group and its community, and the current programs from local organisations that address these needs.

In addition to these long-term partnerships, *We women* continued to be an active member of the steering committee of the CBO Resource Center throughout 2012. Unfortunately, as the source of funding for this network organization was suspended at the beginning of the year and no new sources of funding were attracted, the CBO Resource Center closed its doors at the end of the year.

Developments at the organisation level in 2011

	2010	2011	2012
Number of changes to the board	–	–	–
Number of changes to the advisory board	–	–	–
Number of salaried positions	–	3	6
Number of active volunteers	25	55	49
Number of partner organisations	2	3	3

The results

Research

Several focus areas can be identified when capturing the research activities of our organization in 2012. The staff of our organization has actively conducted three research projects over the last year. Firstly, there's the finalization of the research *We women* undertook in collaboration with our partner organization Bridging Education Access for Migrants (BEAM): "*The situational description of education for migrants from Burma in Chiang Mai from the student's perspectives and those of the organization's leaders*". This research project started in 2011 and was finalized in the first quarter of 2012. It aimed to identify the educational aspirations of migrants from Burma who live in and around Chiang Mai, as well as identifying gaps in the educational opportunities that are available to them. The results enabled us to critically reflect upon our programs and innovate them where necessary.

As we are a women's organization, *We women* is continuously conducting gender research. It is important for us to stay informed about the situation of women in our environment. The results of this ongoing research have an immediate impact on the development and implementation of our programs. Through 2012, the results of the gender research were compiled and used to develop the *Gender Dialogues project*. Though it was planned to implement the pilot of the program in 2012, it was pushed forward to mid 2013. The objective of the program is to raise awareness of gender equality issues in the unrecognized refugee community of Chiang Mai, so that women will have greater opportunity to access leadership positions. In order to realize the project objective, the *We women foundation* facilitates open dialogue on gender equality between men and women from CBOs operating within the unrecognized refugee community in Northern Thailand and the Thai-Burma border region. A deepened understanding of the gender issues faced in work and daily life, will help overcome those issues with better insight and solutions.

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, *We women* is examining the possibility to implement programs inside Burma. As the challenges that people are facing and the situation inside the country differs greatly from the migrants living in Northern Thailand, we feel it necessary to approach the development of new projects carefully. In order to ensure that we will be offering programs of high quality, we have been conducting exploratory research into new target groups and their current and actual needs. Several staff members travelled to Burma throughout the year to speak with our contacts there, develop new contacts and get a feel for the current situation and needs that are visible in society. The results of these exploratory visits make up the basis of the project ideas we are currently developing and the first results indicate that a focus on higher education might not be the best approach to improving the situation of women living in the rural areas of Burma. As the economy of Burma is extremely weak, there is a more pressing need for people to find stable forms of income. An education will improve the chances of women when looking for jobs, but this is not possible when there are no jobs. We are now looking at the option of training women in social entrepreneurship and business management. What our programs inside Burma will look like exactly, is not yet known.

Research results

	2010	2011	2012
Number of active studies	2	2	3
– Number of hours – research with BEAM	136	432	120
– Number of hours – gender research	132	106	80
– Number of hours – Burma research	–	–	340

The *We women from Burma project*

The long-term objective of the *We women from Burma project* is: to support unrecognised female refugees from Burma in acquiring key positions within policy-making and influential organisations, so that they can empower other women and their community in their own way. These types of positions are currently often fulfilled by outsiders. Research has shown that women primarily identify the acquiring of academic qualifications as an opportunity to realise this. As women traditionally have a subservient role, they are not given this opportunity sufficiently.

In order to realise our long-term objective, the *We women foundation* intends to make higher education accessible for the future female leaders of Burma. In addition, we assist them where possible in the process of professional development. To this end we have developed a number of programmes that jointly make up the *We women from Burma project*:

Pre-university program

The pre-university program is aimed at supporting the participants in gaining the required qualifications to be admitted to the university of their choice. The activities that make up this program are: academic English class, guidance counselling and coaching, critical thinking and academic writing workshops and job placement services. Over 2012, twenty women participated in the pre-university program. As twenty is the maximum number we can accommodate at the moment, this number will be kept constant.

Scholarship program

The scholarship program is aimed at giving our best participants a scholarship for a university program. Together with the advisory board, we assess the candidates that submit an application. During the assessment process we consider the background and capacities of the women, but also their ambitions to take an active role in improving the lives of people from and in Burma. The costs that are covered by the scholarship are tuition fees, travelling and visa costs and lodging expenses in the city that the university is located in. This allows our students to focus completely on the education. Despite the preparations of the pre-university program, our students need their full attention to be able to keep up with the pace and level of education in international universities. The number of scholarships granted rose from six in 2011 to fourteen in 2012.

In-university program

We women supports students that attend university by means of coaching, study training and access to online academic sources. We consciously opted for providing these activities on a small scale, so that we can support all our students personally and in a manner befitting their situation. Our support ranges from practical and academic support to emotional support during the personal development process. While in university, each student receives a total of six hours of counselling and support. The total number of hours of support provided in 2012 is eighty-four.

Internship program

This program offers students the possibility to translate their theoretic knowledge into practical work experience. *We women* believes that an academic title alone is not enough to have the women immediately acquire jobs as the future leaders of Burma. It is therefore important that they can further develop their theoretical expertise and learn to translate it into practical experience. In addition, the program offers the opportunity to create a professional network that will help them find their way in their respective work fields. Since this program was implemented in 2012, only one student has participated in it so far. In the future, more students will gain practical working experience through internship placements arranged by *We women*.

Alumni program

Since our first student only graduated at the end of 2012, this program has not yet entered the implementation phase in 2012. We are currently designing this program and will begin implementing it throughout 2013.

Project results

	2010	2011	2012
Pre-university program			
Number of pre-university participants	10	24	20
Number of workshops and training sessions	–	6	6
Number of hours of coaching	60	120	100
Number of job placements	–	5	3
Scholarship Grant program			
Number of scholarships granted	–	8	14
In-university program			
Number of students in-university	–	5	14
Number of hours of in-university coaching	–	30	84
Number of graduands	–	–	1
Internship program			
Number of internship placements	–	–	1

Communication and fundraising

To inform the stakeholders involved in our work about the developments in our organization and its programs, *We women* utilizes several communications channels. The most important ones are our newsletter, our website and our social media outlets (Facebook and Twitter). As you can see in the statistics segment below, the numbers of recipients, visitors and followers have increased compared to 2011.

Communication results

	2010	2011	2012
Number of unique visitors of the website	1110	3789	5882
Number of blogs published	7	29	31
Number of addresses on newsletter distribution list	154	372	562
Number of newsletters distributed	2	4	4
Number of followers on Facebook	–	335	765
Number of followers on Twitter	–	129	265

Trying to elaborate on the success of the last two years, *We women* has organized several public events to inform the audience about our work and raise funds to make it possible. These events were organized in the Netherlands and online. Like last year, we collaborated with Utrecht-based co-op WWG during the Queen's Day celebrations in the city centre of Utrecht in April. Our

volunteers worked together with residents of the co-op to organize a stage, a bar and toilet facilities, of which all proceeds were donated to the *We women foundation*. We would like to use this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and co-op residents for making this day possible two years in a row.

In November, *We women* volunteers joined forces to organize the first *We women Art Auction*. Together with the Pansodan Gallery in Yangon, *We women* brought thirty-four paintings from Burmese artists to Amsterdam. These paintings, and additional works donated by Dutch artists, were auctioned off during a public event. All the proceeds of this auction go towards the work of the *We women foundation*, the Burmese artists and the Pansodan Gallery for the promotion of contemporary art in and from Burma. With over half of the total catalogue sold, this event was successful.

Like last year, we closed off the year with an online campaign. Using our Facebook and Twitter following, we tried to raise as much awareness for our work as possible. At the same time, we asked people to make a donation towards our good cause. We started working with a new online donation platform, Global Giving. To be a permanent member of Global Giving, organization need to raise a minimum of \$5000 by at least thirty individual donors within one month. The fact that we managed to succeed in this challenge shows that this campaign was a success.

In addition to the benefit and networking events that *We women* attended in the past year, we have also taken many steps to attract new donors. We can roughly subdivide these donors into three categories: institutional, corporate and private donors. Each of these groups requires its own approach, so we spent considerable time and effort to create a good mix of donors from these three groups. We will provide a more in-depth analysis of the financial state of *We women* in the next chapter. We would however like to take this opportunity to thanks one of corporate donors for their generous contribution here: Pure & Company (www.pureandco.com).

Fundraising results in 2011

	2010	2011	2012
Number of benefit events	4	4	2
Number of online campaigns	–	1	1
Number of active monthly (private) donors	13	14	16
Number of one-off (private) donors	16	24	61
Number of active institutional donors	1	10	6
Number of active corporate donors	2	6	3

The finances

The total expenditure of 2012 was 9.9% higher than was budgeted for. More money than expected was spent on research and organizing fundraising events. At the same time, the fundraising events that were organized raised significantly more money than in previous years. Also the amount of money raised through private donations was significantly higher. To our great joy we managed to cover all costs with the donations we received during the year. Below is a list of all revenue and expenditure.

Revenue and expenditure in 2012 (in €)

	2010	2011	2012
Revenue			
Donations private	2.750,23	6.611,34	14.065,34
Donations corporate	780,00	40.846,70	34.683,11
Donations institutional	200,00	39.778,69	31.466,19
Benefit events	1.470,87	6.874,04	13.392,14
Other	6.236,26	531,94	673,63
Total revenue	11.437,36	94.642,71	94.280,41
	2010	2011	2102
Expenditure			
Programme costs (80,8% of total expenditure)			
– Research	-	1.679,43	5.134,68
– Projects	1.906,82	32.388,84	76.343,54
– Advocacy	1.507,16	1.731,68	5.532,19
Communications & fund-raising (7,9% of total expenditure)			
– Outsourcing fund-raising	-	3.665,20	4.387,13
– Benefit events	1.507,17	891,96	2.877,39
– Promotion materials	975,52	787,55	1.233,36
Management & operational costs (11,1% of total expenditure)			
– Salaries	-	1.940,95	4.199,36
– Office & utilities	1.184,20	1.808,44	4.154,47
– Office supplies	455,20	1.120,78	2.160,30
– Travel costs	-	125,24	373,85
– Telephone costs	-	267,40	553,46
– Backing charges	-	278,39	309,47
– Postage	-	-	156,33
Other (0,3% of total expenditure)	15,00	408,66	294,67
Total expenditure	7.551,07	47.094,52	107.710,20

In addition to fully covering the incurred costs, the organisation has endeavoured to build a continuity reserve for 2013. This to prevent liquidity problems from arising at the beginning of the year. After processing the financial records of 2012, the balance is as follows (next page):

Balance 2012 (in €)

Balance 1-1-2012

Cash & bank accounts	51.434,48	Allocated reserves	18.703,87
		Continuity reserve	32.730,62
	51.434,48		51.434,48

Balance 31-12-2012

Cash & bank accounts	38.004,69	Accounts payable*	8.330,00
		Allocated reserves**	5.270,48
		Continuity reserve	24.404,21
	38.004,69		38.004,69

* Second instalment scholarship Nang Pao Hom & payment to Pansodan Art Gallery

** Corporate donation reserved for scholarship Khaing May Oo

The budget for 2013 amounts to €153.500, so coming year we will have to spend considerable time on fund-raising again. Staff and volunteers are fully committed to ensure that the annual report of 2013 will again show a good balance in finances.

Acknowledgements

We women would like to thank the following people for their continuous support:

- ✧ Thanks to all our students, without whose commitment and success our programs would be useless. Keep up the good work!
- ✧ A special thank you to all our partner organizations: BEAM, EPOP and the CBO Resource Centre, for their continuous support over the past years. And all organizations that will be involved in the *Gender Dialogues project*.
- ✧ Members of our advisory board: thank you for your continued support to our work.
- ✧ Pure & Co: our largest corporate sponsor. We thank you very much for your generous support. Without you, our students wouldn't be able to go to university and fulfil their ambitions.
- ✧ We would also like to thank all our other corporate donors.
- ✧ AtDta: our biggest institutional donor. Your support has made a major impact on the lives of our students.
- ✧ Many thanks also to our other institutional donors: Johannes Stichting and Solidariteitsfonds Keizersgrachtkerk.
- ✧ All the volunteers that assisted us in any way: a massive thank you to you all. Wherever you are in the world and whatever you did for us. Without you, we wouldn't have been able to grow as fast as we have over the past years. A special thank you to the volunteers who helped us during Queen's Day and to those who made our first art auction a big success.
- ✧ All donors who donated generously to our cause. There are too many of you to name you all, but be sure to know we value each and every one of you.

We hope we can count on your support again in 2013!