

WE WOMEN FOUNDATION



Annual Report 2017

Preface

2017 was a year A year of reflection and new focus; back to the roots.

As the We women foundation is a small organisation with few resources, our focus of the past year and of the coming year will be on continuing our formal education project and on growing We women Myanmar into an independent office. After an evaluation process we decided that our core expertise lies in education, this should be our main focus as our resources are scarce. On top of this our wish is to grow into a bigger organization, so that we can run and grow more leadership projects, like Women Agents of Change; our Social Entrepreneurs Trainings. If we want to achieve this, we need to build a stronger foundation in Myanmar. Therefore 2018 will be the year of building our network in Myanmar, enforcing our local team and of assisting more women into leadership positions through education.

I am proud to say that the results in the field keep on multiplying, as that was We women's goal all along, "educate one, empower thousands". Our women are empowering thousands and it is amazing to see how they do it. With passion, dedication and self knowledge they build projects, stand up for the minority people in their communities and fight for equal rights for all. We will keep on standing strong with you all, dear women in the field, we will keep dedicating our time to support your cause. Realizing Social Change Together.

With respect for all our women, friends and faithful supporters, I greet you warmly

Ursula Cats

Executive Director We women foundation

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1. Mission, Organization Structure and Developments

1.1 Mission statement

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.

1.2 Working method

All organizational activities contribute to the realisation of well-built projects that address the needs of our target groups. As described in our mission statement, academic research is the basis of our work. Not only during the startup phase of projects, but also thereafter. Ongoing research into the impact of our projects in relation to the needs of our target group makes that *We women* is 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 projects 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 in only those places where it is most needed.

To create the perfect conditions for our work, *We women* also focuses on raising awareness on issues that concern our work. For the execution of projects, *We women* depends on the support of partner organizations, donors and volunteers. Awareness about the urgency of our work amongst these actors is fundamental to be able to make proper requests for support.

1.3 Organizational structure

All activities of our organisation are supervised by the board of the foundation. With gratefulness for her support and dedication we said goodbye to Cisca Jansen this year. We welcomed Hayle Rose into our team. In 2017 six board meetings were held. The board members and their roles are:

- Ms Maartje Eigeman (chairman)
- Ms Maartje Meens (treasurer)
- Ms Hayley Rose (Member)

All of the organisation's activities are managed by the executive director: Ms Ursula Cats. In her work, she is advised by a think tank of women from the field of (international) development

work. This think tank consists of several renowned women who are very familiar with the developments in Myanmar and the Southeast Asian region. Some of them live in Myanmar and are of ethnic descent, where others are foreigners who live or have lived in the region for longer periods of time. Some of them are active at the grassroots level, where others are or have been working with INGO's. Each bring their own specific expertise and skills set and we are extremely lucky to be able to ask them for assistance and their insights when we need them.

The organisation's activities are realized by a team of employees and volunteers, supervised by the executive director. Over 2017, there was only one paid position in the organization; the country director of our Myanmar office. The executive director and fundraising & communications personnel all worked on a voluntary basis. The fundraising & communications officer supporting the organisation in 2017 on a regular base, has received a compensation for her work (official volunteer fee).

The level of involvement of these supporters differs greatly; some have been active for several years already on a continuous basis, while others take on tasks for just one day. Our volunteers are from various parts of the world and from all walks of life.

1.4 Organisational developments

We women was established in 2010 in the Netherlands. Over the first five years, the organization has been primarily active in Thailand. The organization first started activities in Myanmar in 2014 with the implementation of the pilot of the *Gender Dialogues project* in Taunggyi, Shan State.

We women moved its projects into Myanmar in the course of 2015, by establishing a permanent office in Yangon, Myanmar. The office is a shared space with an organisation (BEAM) that also moved its projects from Thailand to Myanmar and with which *We women* has been working before. Sharing the office and knowledge and resources, creates a win-win relationship.

With the opening of the office in Yangon, the activities of the Thailand office have dwindled down to a level that in Thailand only an income generating function exists; the office space is now mainly used as a place for hosting volunteers. The Thai organization will remain active in a low key state.

2. Accomplishments 2017

2.1 Women Agents of Change; *Social Enterprises by Women for a Social Economy in Myanmar*

Vision behind the project:

We women believes Myanmar should be a nation in which women are considered to be equal and a driving force behind economic, social and political reform. At every level, women from different ethnic backgrounds should be leading in shaping institutions, policies and values. To this end, the *Women: Agents of Change* project seeks to plant the seeds of a social economy in the women of Myanmar, aiming to build a critical mass of women leaders to serve as role models to all girls and women in Myanmar.

Project objective: To catapult women from disadvantaged communities into positions of leadership by empowering them with key business knowledge and capital to found social enterprises, enabling them to bring about sustainable change for themselves and their community.

- To expand the knowledge base of participants by providing training in basic business concepts and financing,
- To assist participants in translating their entrepreneurial ideas into concrete and viable business plans,
- To provide participants with the necessary capital to establish their social enterprises,
- To support participants with advice and coaching during the process of founding and expanding their social enterprises.

Various circumstances have changed the situation of our Women Agents of Change (WAC) Project. As the *We women* foundation is a small organisation with few resources, our focus of the past year and of the coming year will be on continuing our formal education project and on growing *We women Myanmar* into an independent office. As we would also like WAC to continue next year, but have few resources for this, we would like to give a handover training for our local partner organizations, so that they can continue business trainings in 2019. *We women* will be their advisor on the long term and will join forces when resources allow us to.

The main change of the aim of WAC is that not *We women* trainers themselves will train the women on the ground, but that *We women* will train trainers, who will give training to the women in the field. **The new projects objectives are:** To train trainers, so that they can catapult women from disadvantaged communities into positions of leadership by empowering them with key business knowledge and capital to found social enterprises, enabling them to bring about sustainable change for themselves and their community. The training will focus on handing over the project to the local community. We will have selected ethnic grassroots initiatives to ensure local ownership and sustainability for the project.

More specifically the project will:

- Teach trainers how to expand the knowledge base of participants by knowing how to provide training in basic business concepts and financing
- Teach trainers to assist participants in translating their entrepreneurial ideas into concrete and viable business plans
- Teach Trainers how to provide participants with opportunities and connections to access capital to establish their social enterprises
- Teach trainers how to support participants with advice and coaching during the process of founding and expanding their social enterprises

IN 2018 The project is expected to train twenty-four to thirty-two trainers from three or four partner organisations.

2.2 Awareness Raising**Campaigns**

This Years campaign “Educate One Empower Thousands”, was very successful and supported by many people around the world. Twenty volunteers worked hard on awareness raising and fundraising. This year we raised €4632 through 50 people who donated. Many new and existing supporters have joined the cause via our social media outlets. Thanks to our campaign ambassadors we were able to create more awareness.

In January and April 2017 Cooking Workshops took place. It was wonderful to see how diverse people enjoyed learning about Myanmar and cooking together. To be able to raise awareness among a new group of people in such a fun way is contagious so we will continue the workshops next year. On top of the fun and awareness raising we collected €786.

The Scholarship for Khaing Campaign, came into being to assist Khaing May Oo in covering her living expenses throughout her education. Khaing May Oo aims to get her university degree in Social Policy and Development and follow her dreams to establish better social protection policies, services and strategies for all citizens equally in Myanmar. She is a serious, determined and intellectual young woman that has proven over and over again that she is capable of reaching her goals and passions. We raised €3000 and Khaing is now studying hard to finish her BA degree.

2.3 Women Leadership Network Myanmar

Over the past year, thirteen Women Leadership Network meetings were held. Average ten women have attended our meetings. We can not accept more than fifteen women due the available space. According to their interest and expertise, women attending the network meetings, some come multiple times and others once. Every meeting we have new women signing up, also some men join us on various meetings. The women attending come from various disciplines: students, housewives, youth and women from non-government organizations join the meetings. The speakers invited are well known and experts in their field. In 2017 hundred-sixty-six women attended the Women leadership network meetings. The topics of this year varied from LGBT, Federalism, Peace Process, Youth & Health, Freedom of Expression,

Awareness of ICCPR, Freedom of Religion and Belief, Law & Gender, Civic Education, Sexuality & SOGIE and Scholarship & Universities.

Experiences of our participants:

Ya Min Oo joined the January meeting “Domestic Violence and Law” and the February Meeting “Comprehensive Sexuality Education”. Ya Min Oo explained that she had not had the knowledge

about the domestic violence problems in Myanmar. No one had shared this issue before in her community. She learned through the meetings what the domestic violence problems in her community look like and what laws there are in place to deal with domestic violence and the challenges surrounding this issue. After the meeting she started to do more research herself about domestic violence and shared her findings with her community through sharing it on Facebook and talking about it with her friend and relatives. The topic Sexuality Education brought her insight that sexual education for women and children is hardly available and that what is available is very skewed and limited. Therefore she started a Facebook campaign with her friends and through this campaign she is sharing her experience and knowledge to the students at Primary school and her seniors and juniors in her working place. At the same time she started her own sexual education training.

Ya Min Oo says's: *“After joining these monthly meetings and discussions at the We women foundation, I am gradually changing my critical thinking and how I conceive news and stories.”*

Khiang Hnin Hnin Oo participated in three Women Leadership Meeting and felt that she got more insight into her dreams and how to put these dreams into her future career path. She got insight into scholarship opportunities and what living abroad as a Myanmar student means. She has started to work intensively to improve her English Skills and leadership Skills since these meetings. She also has shared her knowledge about positive thinking and the effect it has on your self esteem with her friends and together with her friends they are sharing the positive thoughts about themselves and feel themselves growing day by day. Khiang Hnin Hnin Oo: *“I feel more confident and I am motivated to always whatever I do put women empowerment on the first.”*

2.4 We women scholarship project

In 2017 We women provided two partial scholarships to:

Nang Si Htong Studies for a Master degree in MBA, Specializing in Human Resource Management at Zhejiang Normal University in China.

“The knowledge of my study can provide vital information that can be used by the management of the hospital and other relevant organization would understand the factors that inhibit women career progression public sector especially in the service industry and be

able to strategize ways that will ensure women climb up the top management in the organization on merit. The study can also be used to help the government to understand how gender inequalities affect the community and the country as a whole so that they can put in place policies that will reduce inequalities especially to the disadvantaged. I will utilize my acquired knowledge from this degree as an instrument of positive change in my family, my work and my community. And will participate in all aspects of my life with energy, purpose and gratitude. I will use my understanding and information in strategy and administration to ensure that my work place is productive and positive and my community is responsive and growing.

Education has shaped and molded me into a better and wise woman now because higher education plays an important role in helping students reach their goals. Studying further provides a clear career path, prepares you for challenges and then allows you to gain critical skills.”

While Si Htong was on her research trip in the public hospital in Yangon, she hosted a knowledge sharing meeting at We women’s headquartes.

Khaing May Oo studies Social Policy and Development at Thammasat university in Bangkok Thailand and follows her dreams to establish better social protection policies, services and strategies for all citizens equally in Myanmar.

“I want to focus my career on social work and social policy studies. I believe that this type of specialization will allow me one day to go back to my country and help my community in many ways. Since there is no well-designed social protection system and services in Myanmar, I strongly believe that there is a strong need to upgrade the country's social welfare programs and development services. Getting a scholarship does not just mean financial support, but also an evidence to demonstrate and motivate many young people of my country who are underprivileged and lack of education and development opportunity.”

Moan Kaein studies International Political Economy and Development (IPED) at Rangsit University in Bangkok, Thailand.

“Pursuing a tertiary degree has always been my dream. Since I graduated from high school in 2001, I have been working for women's organizations and was not able to get chance to continue my education for the past ten years. However, the We women foundation has been providing me great support to make my dream come

true. After trying for several years, I was able to take the first step of my educational journey. I enrolled for the first term in August 2017. My major is International Political Economy and Development (IPED). It will take me about three and half years to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

I have learned from my first term at Rangsit University that I am quite far from the content related to business and economic and have already gotten a lot of information on this topic. Some of the new things that I have also learned from the first term are how to work with an advisor to choose classes grading system, and how to manage classes and credits based on my long-term goals for graduating within 4 years. There are many new things that I have learned but there are also challenges starting an undergraduate degree as an older student was not an easy task. I feel that I am not a quick learner as before and I need to study very hard to memorize or understand the concept of new issues. For example: the Micro economy subject was the most difficult for me to study. Another challenge to study in Bangkok is I need to adjust myself to living in an urban metropolis.

IPED is the major that I am very much interested in and I choose to study at this university because of this major. I have understood that self-study is the most important part and I need to give more time for this. Starting to enter into the formal education, there are many new things that I have learned and experienced. There are also some challenges but, this is the way we can improve ourselves.”

Two former alumni of university preparation project entered universities with other scholarship grant providers :

Ah Noh Executive Master in Public Administration Syracuse University in the USA.

Knin Nyein San Graduate School of Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology in Warsaw, in Poland.

3. Financial statement

All amounts are in Euro.

3.1 Revenues and expenditures

Revenues

Donations monthly private donors	1.370
Donations fundraising campaigns & events	25.174
Donations foundations	11.883
Volunteers renting rooms	3.779
Total	42.206

Expenditures

Program costs	41.175
Outsourced fundraising	3.625
Telephone & website hosting	353
Banking charges	448
Other	1.263
Total	46.864

Result	- 4.658
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3.2 Balance sheet

Assets	31-12-2017	31-12-2016
Bank balance	18.829	22.210
Paypal balance	1.523	2.260*
Total assets	19.812	24.470
Liabilities	31-12-2017	31-12-2016
Allocated reserves	4.000	9.300**
Continuity reserve	15.812	15.170*
Total liabilities	19.812	24.470

* The paypal balance has been introduced to the balance sheet from 2017 on. For reasons of completeness, the balance sheet of 2016 has been updated with this paypal balance. The allocated reserves and the continuity reserve have been corrected as well, following the introduction of the paypal balance.

3.3 Explanatory notes

In 2017, the revenues from donations and fundraisers have not been covering the costs of the program in MMR and other expenditures. Fundraising has been outsourced to two people receiving the legal compensation fee for volunteers. Although some work has been performed in 2016, the costs for this compensation is on the balance of 2017 (** 1500 euro included in the allocated reserve).

Activities and hence program costs in MMR increased in 2017.

An allocation of 4000 euro has been put on the balance for the Women Agents of Change program. The continuity reserve remains 15.000 euro, covering the minimal continuity costs for both activities in the Netherlands as MMR.

Acknowledgements

This year many people have been active again and some people in specific, like Dinnia Joedadibrata. She has been an amazing help with setting up the campaign and the wonderful cooking workshops. I want to thank you for your dedication, hard and accurate work. It has been wonderful to work with such a professional passionate woman!

Thanks also to all who helped Dinnia during the campaign especially; Annelies Christiani, Nathalie Noach, Irene Veldhuijzen, Cathy Tung, Pyuy and Armelle van Helden. Much gratefulness goes to Talma Joachimsthal who donated In De Ruimte (IDR) as our cooking workshop space. IDR is an inspirational co-working space in the heart of Utrecht on the Oudegracht 230 aan de werf. If you need a workspace go and check it out, the atmosphere is fantastic.

Thank you Maaïke Matelski, for always helping us out with supporting women to get scholarships degrees, we can't do it without you! Busarin Lertchavalitsakul a big thank you for you as well, as you have been very active to raise funds for Khaing, we are grateful for your support and dedication.

Hsu Hnin Htet is the amazing communication officer in Yangon, who has been very active and has been a tremendous help! Shiba who has organized the Women Leadership Networks very professional, always arranging the best speakers in town and high quality discussions!

Sadaf with her enthusiasm and love for women rights has helped us with fundraising and we are grateful for her accuracy, passion and time investment

Christel has been a big help with the campaign and as a supporter who always gives good advice.

And of course a big thank you to all our supporters, friends who have been with us since the start of We women and new friends who we welcome into our We women family!

I can't say enough how grateful I am and I hope all of you who worked with us know what it means to the women in Myanmar to get a chance to grow into their leadership positions.

And to all the women we work with from Myanmar, I also would like you to know that I have a deep respect for all of you, it is a privilege to be working with you, I learn so much from you all. I want to thank you for your courage to stand up and grow and to have ambitions that serve many more women in Myanmar and around the world. You are the much needed role models in our society.

Ursula Cats