



ANNUAL REPORT

2019

Preface

As the women in Myanmar are now fully independent under We women Myanmar and receive support and funding from We women international, we are planning to start a pilot project in the Netherlands by the end of 2019. I feel happy that the women in Myanmar have chosen their own course, as this is what I had envisioned from the beginning of We women, that the women whom we supported would run the organisation and set up their own programs. I am proud of the Myanmar team, who stand strong and are full of new ideas to support their local communities. There is more space to manoeuvre in Myanmar, so more activism can take place, but there is still a need to be cautious as 25% of the seats in parliament are still occupied by the military. Therefore the importance of strengthening civil society is tremendous. The need to give strength to the women in the field so that they feel they can stand up and claim their leadership roles is prominent. There is a need for a strong ethnic civil society movement, as they must be represented in the near future. The work of We women Myanmar is therefore still urgent and I hope that you all continue to support our strong women inside!

At the same time We women International will slowly start to implement a project for Syrian refugee women in the Netherlands. The project is still in development and when more is known we will share the news with you.

Thanks for your continuous support for the women from Myanmar,

Ursula Cats, Founder & Director We women International

contextual background

The We women foundation is an international NGO registered as a non-profit in the Netherlands. Currently, the organisation is made up of two units; We women international, based in the Netherlands, and We women Myanmar, based in Yangon, Myanmar.

Since its inception in 2010, We women foundation has focused on supporting and boosting the development of women leadership. Starting in Thailand, academic & leadership training and academic scholarships were awarded to the most promising young women from the community of refugees from Myanmar based in Thailand. Then after the first, tentative political reforms were taking place in Myanmar, a new head office was founded in Yangon. With the Yangon office taking on more program activities, and increasingly limited access to financial resources, the Thailand office was soon closed. Funding possibilities for scholarships became harder to obtain and with this, the focus of We women shifted from academic scholarships to more easily accessible leadership projects for women doing grassroots work in Myanmar.

Observing the broader context of the political reforms in Myanmar up close, it can be concluded that the environment in which We women Myanmar operates is as volatile and unstable as the legal obscurity and precarious living conditions of refugees from Myanmar in Thailand, maybe even more so. Human rights are violated on a daily basis, while armed conflicts continue in the border regions, and Myanmar is the backdrop of one of the most widely reported ethnic cleansing campaigns in recent history. Now more than ever, Myanmar needs a strong civil society movement that can critically address the actions of the 'hybrid' government that is ruling the country. Especially with the upcoming elections later in 2020. There is an urgent need for ethnic leaders in all layers of society as well as in the government, so that their rights can be represented. Therefore we should continue to support ethnic women leaders to make sure that their voices can be heard and actions supporting them and their communities can be taken.

Organisation

We women international supported We women Myanmar through expertise sharing, management coaching, coaching of people who are training to be coaches, student coaching and funding.

We women International is 100% run by volunteers.

Ten volunteers from around the world assisted We women in their goals in 2019; they provided their knowledge and time to contribute to our cause.

Board: Ursula Cats, Hayley Rose, Caroline Seagle and Maartje Meens

We women Myanmar has two paid staff members:

Director Num Aye and Fundraiser and Project Coordinator Shiba.

Fifteen volunteers assist the staff members with projects and fundraising.

We women International activities

Expertise Sharing

Every month the staff in Myanmar had two meetings with volunteer experts in the Netherlands. One meeting was focused on fundraising and one meeting was focused on program development, monitoring and evaluation.

Management Coaching

Bi-weekly management coaching sessions were held for the director in Myanmar. Topics ranged from communication, staff training and management, personal coaching and fundraising.

Coaching of people training to be coaches

A coaching module was written by Ursula Cats and six women joined the online coaching training. The aim of the coaching module and training is to assist We women alumni to become leadership coaches of the We women students in Myanmar. After the training the We women alumni can coach women who have the drive to change themselves and their communities.

The coaching module trains We women alumni to let women explore and get insight into their skills, strengths and future aims, so that they can grow as leaders and make a realistic and individual fitting personal development plan. The reason that this training has been developed is that coaching was highly valued by the women who wanted to become leaders. Especially since most women have no access to resources about leadership and many faced traumatic life experiences and they all have faced cultural difficulties through gender inequality. Gender inequality can lead towards low self-esteem and less self-confidence. This in turn will slow down, discourage, stop or even turn down personal and inner strengths development. To believe in oneself and to feed inner strengths is necessary to grow into leadership positions. The women gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses, build their self-confidence and inner strengths, grow into their leadership capacities, get access into available resources and learn to create a realistic future plan.

Student coaching

Ursula Cats gave weekly leadership coaching to students and volunteers of We women Myanmar.

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

We women Myanmar activities

Women Leadership Program

The Women Leadership Network (WLN) connects women from different backgrounds and provides them with a platform to engage in local, regional and national dialogue about the challenges Myanmar faces in today's world. More importantly, women utilise their combined knowledge and experience to propose creative solutions and identify actions that they can take to address the underlying causes to these problems. Building bridges, the network brings together women from all ethnicities and religions with different backgrounds in academia, business and civil society. Therefore, the Women Leadership Network is **an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural action network** aimed at driving social change and advancing women's peace and security.

The network operates in local chapters in different cities, states and divisions in Myanmar. Using a grassroots approach, the networks are run by local women who are familiar with the local context. Based on the specific needs of the community, each network decides its own focus. Examples of topics the Women Leadership Network focuses on are domestic violence, women's involvement in the peace process, freedom of expression, religious and cultural tensions or the role of men in gender emancipation.

Hence, we believe that leadership coaching is necessary to believe in oneself and to feed inner strengths. We women Inner leadership & Career Coaching: Transforming trauma into power gives an insight into traumas and subconscious patterns and transforms these into personal strengths. It also examines life experiences, future dreams and career aims. The inner leadership & career coaching is given to emerging women leaders who are committed towards bringing social change and transformation.

WLN Yangon addressed the following topics:

- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence
- Myanmar Women & Depression
- Women Empowerment and Reproductive Health
- Gender based violence
- Digital Privacy for Women
- GBV & Protection
- HIV
- LGBT among Myanmar's customs and traditions
- CEDAW & UNSCR 1325 Awareness Raising

WLN Pyay

Thanks to a small grant from Paung Ku (a Myanmar NGO), a six-month run of Women Leadership Network meetings was conducted in the city of Pyay. This limited series ran from December 2018 to May 2019.

The following six topics were discussed in the Pyay WLN meetings:

- The Law for Domestic Peace

- The Law Protection of Women
- The work of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Discrimination & HIV
- Child Protection and Children's Rights
- Digital Security

Training

A three-day women and leadership training was held in the second quarter of the year. It addressed women at work, professional management and women leadership challenges and opportunities.

In the last quarter of the year a four-day Basic Gender Awareness training was held.

A partnership with youth groups led by the Practical English Club was set up and weekly basic English classes were held. Every class was attended by 6 to 10 students. Throughout the year, four grammar training sessions of 4 days each were held. There were 10 to 12 students attending each training session.

The volunteers of the foundation have been raising online awareness by posting three informative posts a week, which are followed and shared by the women in our network.

Three classes of basic and intermediate levels of English classes have been held throughout the year with volunteer teachers. Fifty women have attended these weekly classes.

Awareness Raising

Campaign Because She is a Leader 2019

The aim of this campaign is to raise awareness about the necessity of education for women.

We believe that women's education is the world's best investment that has many returns. It not only leads to economic growth but also has positive impact in many places around the world, such as 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 women 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 whole society benefits.

Cooking Workshop

On 30 November 2019, We women held an awareness raising event, Myanmar Cooking. In Utrecht, women from Myanmar and the Netherlands volunteered to host a cooking workshop. The workshop started with an introduction about Myanmar and the work of the We women foundation then groups of five people learned how to make several Myanmar dishes to end with a dinner. Twenty people joined the workshop, eight of whom became friends of We women.

Fundraising

Aiming for complete self-reliance of We women Myanmar, the staff of the Yangon office received on-the-job training for fundraising in early 2018. A Dutch volunteer with a history in fundraising spent three months working in the Myanmar office, training a newly hired junior fundraiser and other staff and volunteers in the basics of fundraising; from development of a fundraising plan and donor strategizing / retention to attending networking meetings and proposal writing.

In the strategy to establish a financially independent We women Myanmar, the number of secured grants by the Yangon staff was supposed to increase over 2019. With the first grant secured by the beginning of the year, everything went as planned. Unfortunately, the junior fundraiser that was trained over 2018 left the organisation halfway through the year and the cultivated expertise was missing from the organisation.

With the departure of the junior fundraiser, the self-reliance strategy for We women Myanmar was set back greatly. There is a severe lack of trained fundraisers in Myanmar, so it's virtually impossible to find a replacement and We women international did not have the resources to send another volunteer for another round of on-the-job training in Yangon.

In order to secure some income, We women Myanmar started asking students for contributions for the English classes. Additionally, we have started looking at options to cut costs by finding cheaper office space and reducing staff salaries. We women international made financial support available to keep We women Myanmar afloat until it finds its footing again during this insecure time.

A complete overview of the financials for 2019 of the We women foundation can be found on the next page.

Financial overview 2019

	2017		2018		2019
<u>Revenues and expenditures</u>	in Euro				
Revenue					
Donations monthly private donors	1,370		4,595		1,870
Donations fundraising campaigns & events	25,174		12,664		10,337
Donations foundations	11,883		4,325		0
Volunteers renting rooms	3,779		2,648		159
Total	42,206		24,232		12,366
Expenditures					
Program costs Myanmar	41,175		35,266		9,200
Outsourced fundraising	3,625		4,936		1,749
Telephone & website hosting	353		217		108
Banking charges	448		309		144
Other	1,263		571		1,070
Total	46,864		41,299		12,271
<u>Result</u>	<u>-4,658</u>		<u>-17,066</u>		<u>95</u>

Budget 2020

We women Myanmar

In order to keep the momentum of the work of We women Myanmar, it was decided to offer minimal financial support for 2020. We women International will cover the costs of the Yangon office until new, cheaper office space has been found. Additionally, it will cover the bare minimum costs of running the WLN meetings in Yangon once a month.

Budget 2020 Myanmar	
Rent Yangon office - 300 per month	3,600
WLN Yangon - 100 per month	1,200
Total	4,800

We women International

We women International will be focusing on the implementation of leadership coaching for refugee women in the Netherlands. For more information on this process, we refer you to the project proposal of this project.

Budget 2020 International	
Leadership coaching pilot	5,000
Telephone & web hosting - 35 per mth	420
Banking charges - 25 per mth	300
Total	5,720

Thanks for your support

Thank you to all for supporting us again this year. We are grateful to work with so many dedicated volunteers and have some many donors who join our cause every year.

Warm regards, Ursula