

# Voices of Karenni Women Policy Brief for Peace



Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)

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## Introduction

The framework for political dialogue was developed by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee comprises representatives from EAOs, political parties, Tamataw (military), parliament, and the government of Union of Myanmar, in accordance with the agreements from Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signed between EAOs and The government of Union of Myanmar on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

It prepared to conduct national level political dialogue based on ethnic, region and issues after the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pang Long Union Peace Conference.

With the aim of having comprehensive, just and equitable outcomes from the political dialogue, the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) developed this policy brief, which includes women's voices.

## The Process of Gathering Gender Recommendations for Karenni State Peace Process



In August 2016, the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) conducted awareness training for its own staff and partners to promote women's participation in the peace process. After the training, KNWO staff and partners went to 7 townships<sup>1</sup> within Karenni state and collected the inputs and recommendations of the community (Male 645, Female 1115, Total 1760). This was carried through discussions of human rights issue, women's participation in politics, violence against women, and gender and social cultural norms, from August to September 2016.

The collected voices of women from the villages were gathered and presented at the Karenni State Women's Voice Conference, which was held from 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> September 2016. The conference participants added, edited and finalized the findings. Furthermore, the conference participants were divided into small groups to discuss women, peace and security issues, the 5 main thematic areas included in the framework for political dialogue: Political, social, economy, security, land and natural resource issue from gendered perspective. Based on the group discussion inputs, the participants provided recommendations for Government, Tatmadaw (military), EAOs, Parliament, Political Parties, NOG/CBOs and Donors.

There are a total (440) participants (male 169, female 271) from the Government, EAOs, Parliament, Political Parties, NGO/CBOs, INGOs and community members from 67 villages of 7 townships in Karenni State.

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<sup>1</sup> See detailed information of villages in annex 1



## (1) Recommendations for Karenni Peace Process from Gender Perspective

### (1.1) Political challenges of women from Karenni State

Women from Karenni state are not politically aware and there are few political awareness programs in the state. Moreover, family members, parents and society do not support women's participation in politics. One of the barriers for women's participation in politics is religious and traditional norms. As a result, people do not accept women's leadership. The lack of support system and acceptance in the society, public and national mechanisms lead to reduced women's participation in politics and very few women at the decision-making level.

Hence, the Karenni women's conference would like to recommend the following suggestions to contribute towards democracy and federal system through developing equitable political policies.

### (1.2) Karenni women's suggestions for respective stakeholders on political matters

#### *(1.2.1) Recommendations for government on political matters*

Respect the voices of women in the community, and practice the policy development process which encourages a democratic system, i.e. bottom up approach

- The election system to form governments at all levels (village, township, district etc.) should ensure no gender discrimination, and elect qualified representatives who want to serve the community
- The policy on gender quota system (at least 30% women participation) should be developed for national level political dialogue process: regional, ethnic and issue-based dialogues
- Ensure fair, just, and transparent election process. The election process should also not engage in gender discrimination.
- Include the voices and suggestions from ethnic minorities and political parties who are not entitled state representation at Union level political dialogue
- Develop and implement policies on promoting women's administrators at all levels e.g. village, quarter, township

- Develop school curriculum on human rights, women's rights, political and legal awareness

#### *(1.2.2) Recommendations to tatmadaw (military) on political matters*

- Respect Karenni women's demands to revise the 2008 constitution for greater justice and acceptance by citizens
- Protect citizens and ensure that no harm comes to them, when tatmadaw (military) plans to develop strategy for peace
- Ensure that the appointment procedure has no discrimination and provide equal opportunities for ethnic women and men when forming future federal union Tatmadaw (military). E.g. No discrimination in appointing military officers, military doctors and nurses, technicians etc
- Respect and follow the rules on controlling movement and allow travel only in the restricted area, to prevent unnecessary political clashes and to not frighten the community

#### *(1.2.3) Recommendations for EAOs on political matters*

- Ensure that there is at least 30% women's participation in selecting the representatives from EAOs for political dialogue
- Respect and follow the rule on controlling the movement and allow traveling only in the restricted area to prevent unnecessary political clash and not frighten community

#### *(1.2.4) Recommendations for parliament on political matters*

- Develop quota system for promoting women's participation in politics and the peace process
- Develop national mechanism for female parliament exchange learning, and expand networking with other women's groups to develop necessary capacity and exchange voices
- Ensure that the gender perspective is included in developing any kind of law and policy

- Develop policies and law, which will promote and support women's leaderships, at the household (ten-headed and hundred-headed), and the administrative level
- Develop policies and law on providing Government support for ten - headed households and hundred-headed households. (The reason for demanding this policy is that in Karenni state, the community has to support the hundred- headed household. Some community members have gender-stereotyping ideas and they do not support women leaders. It is one of the root causes of weak women's participation at the administrative level. This is why Karenni women request Government support in this area.)

#### *(1.2.5) Recommendations for political parties on political matters*

- Gender policy should be developed in each political party to promote women's participation in politics
- Develop policies to ensure that respective parliamentarians listen women's issue and bring their voices to discuss in parliament
- All political parties should collaborate and encourage implementing capacity building program on basic democracy, federalism, and politics
- Implement women's empowerment programs to increase political awareness amongst women in Karenni state
- Negotiate for participation of registered political parties in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pang Long Conference, through the current political parties' representatives in the Conference
- All ethnic political parties should collaborate to guide and provide constructive feedback to Government and Chief minister

#### *(1.2.6) Recommendations for CBOs/NGOs on political matters*

- Create and implement capacity building plans for women in Karenni state, to increase their knowledge on politics, election process, democracy and federalism, human rights and civil rights
- Conduct awareness programs for communities and family members, to increase support for women's participation in politics



- Mobilize and advocate to religious leaders, ethnic leaders, traditional leaders and men to recognize women's capacity and promote women's rights

*(1.2.7) Recommendations for donors on political matters*

- Consult with local organizations to understand the real political situation on the ground before funding projects
- Create and implement policy budget to promote women's participation in politics





## (2) Recommendations for Social Matters from Gender Perspective

### (2.1) Social challenges of women from Karenni State



Women, children, the elderly, and the differently able from villages in Karenni State are facing difficulties because of insufficient social welfare services (e.g. transportation, health services, school services, and electricity). Since most government officials are not local people, there is a language barrier and social services cannot be provided effectively. This has an impact on local people. Some villages in conflict areas have not yet been registered in the government's listing. It is not easy for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to get Form 66/6 (household list forms), NRCs (National Registration Cards), and birth certificates. There are also few job opportunities for local ethnic people. In addition, some cultural customs in Karenni State are harmful to women's rights and so these customs need to be modernized. The drug problem is another challenging issue.

## (2.2) Karenni women's suggestions for respective stakeholders on social matters

### *(2.2.1) Recommendations for government on social matters*

- Culture and customs of all ethnicities in Karenni State must be respected. As Myanmar has signed and ratified CEDAW, the government must get rid of customs which discriminate against women
- Reinforce existing laws which protect women
- Implement a justice committee to fight the corruption at the courts, and to have rule of law for the cases of VAWs in the state
- Fairly allocate sufficient budget to urban and rural areas. Sufficient budget should also be allocated to cover the essential costs for women in the rural areas
- Prioritize local people and people who can speak ethnic languages for employment at government departments such as education and health, for effective services and sustainable development
- Effectively reinforce restrictions on the drug issue
- Special projects that take the voice of the public (including the voices of women) into consideration should be implemented during the rehabilitation of the villages in conflict areas
- Implement special projects that guarantee legal documentations (IDs, household registration, birth certificates) for those who can only speak ethnic languages. The word 'dependent' should be eliminated from women's ID cards

### *(2.2.2) Recommendations to Tatmadaw (military) on social matters*

- Take the voices of the local people into consideration in the process of relocation, rehabilitation and social development in Karenni state
- Reinforce the laws on the drugs issue and give serious sentences to drug sellers and people involved in the drug trade



- Implement serious restrictions for VAWs cases in the conflict areas or other areas, and reinforce them effectively
- If a member of the Tatmadaw commits a crime, the trial on the case should be transparent and the law enforcement should be effective

### *(2.2.3) Recommendations for EAOs on social matters*

- Take the voices of the local people into consideration in the process of relocation, rehabilitation and social development in Karenni state
- Restrict its members' participation in the drug trade
- Implement serious restrictions for VAWs cases in the conflict areas or other areas, and reinforce them effectively
- If a member of EAOs commits crimes, the trial on the case should be transparent and the law enforcement should be effective

### *(2.2.4) Recommendations for parliament on social matters*

- Allocate sufficient budget for the development of Karenni State
- Develop laws on VAWs that would protect women
- Translate draft law on women's issues and VAWs into respective ethnic languages
- When women government staff, especially from the departments of is on maternity leave for 6 months, she should continue drawing her full salary.
- Review and revise laws on drugs and alcohol licenses if necessary

### *(2.2.5) Recommendations for political parties on social matters*

- All political parties should collaborate and present the issues of Karenni State through their Member of Parliament to the government
- Implement women's empowerment programs to increase political awareness of women in Karenni state
- Develop policies to take action on the drug trade
- Develop rehabilitation centers, sports programs and other beneficial programs for young people to fight drug and alcohol issues



*(2.2.6) Recommendations for CBOs/NGOs on social matters*

- Present the issues and needs of Karenni State to the stakeholders in collaboration with the local people
- Develop monitoring, documentation and reporting systems on the services of the government, together with local people
- All CBOs/ NGOs should collaborate before implementing projects
- Prioritize local people for employment in the development and social sectors
- Gender equality should also be a main consideration for employment in these sectors

*(2.2.7) Recommendation for donors on social matters*

- Prioritize the needs of local people instead of what they want to develop
- Take the voices of the local people into consideration when they collaborate with the government
- Monitor the effectiveness of their support

**(3) Recommendations for Economic Issues from Gender Perspective****(3.1) Economic Challenges of women from Karenni State**

Local people from the border areas and conflict areas in Karenni State are burdened by taxation collected by the military and ethnic armed groups. Women face greater challenges because of poor transportation and the system of taxation at bamboo gates. Very few business opportunities are available for people who live in conflict areas. Internal Displaced People who return to their hometown need to get work legally and need job opportunities.

**(3.2) Karenni women's suggestions for respective stakeholders on economic matters***(3.2.1) Recommendations for government on economic matters*

- Create job opportunities that do not discriminate between genders. E.g., open training academies for men and women, and create job opportunities for people who finished training
- Negotiate with ethnic armed groups to amend the current taxation system, rates and policies, in order to build a systemic tax system

- Establish a taxation reduction system for widows, for households led by woman, as well as single and native ethnic women entrepreneurs
- Establish policies to create secure, non-violence workplaces for women
- Create secure workplaces for disabled women
- Analyze and amend the loan systems drawn so as to not to discriminate by gender. E.g. Limitations that only the household leader can get loans
- Establish and enforce rules with regard to businesses in regions where local ethnic women face sexual violence and harassment. This is especially in cases where local ethnic women return home to their farmland because of non-native workers who work in investment projects (e.g. digging of sand and crushing stones) near farmland owned by non-native employers. Eliminate business advertisements that portray women as sexual entertainers, and advertisements that cause divisions between men and women.

#### *(3.2.2) Recommendations for Tatmadaw (military) on economic matters*

- Ban the establishment of businesses through improper use of power, as these damage the interests of the public.
- Only establish development projects and introduce new taxation policies after getting the agreement of local ethnic people

#### *(3.2.3) Recommendations for EAOs on economic matters*

- Negotiate with the government and tatmadaw (military) to amend the current taxation system, rate and policies, to get a systematic taxation system
- Establish taxation reduction system for widows, for households led by woman, as well as single and native ethnic women entrepreneurs
- Ban the establishment of businesses through improper use of power, as these damage the interests of the public

#### *(3.2.4) Recommendations for parliament on economic matters*

- Establish a systematic taxation system and a lenient taxation system for women

- Enact policies related to taxation and allocate funds sufficient for the requirements of a region, e.g. for things necessary for women
- Enact fitting business policies for conflict areas and less developed areas, to ensure local economic development (E.g. Loans with small interests, tax exemption, build economic zone where local ethnic people can work)
- Establish a system to inform the public of business-related news in timely manner (E.g. farmland law, investment law, labor law, women-related law, foreign investment law, taxation and allocation funds law)
- Create and enact policies to support businesswomen

#### *(3.2.5) Recommendations for political parties on economic matters*

- Monitor and penalize businesses that exploit natural resources and affect adversely the environment and the interests of local ethnic people
- Create trade associations at the Karenni State level

#### *(3.2.6) Recommendations for CBOs/ NGOs on economic matters*

- Organize a group to monitor businesses at the Karenni State level, as well as to monitor financial issues, from the perspective of human rights and gender equality
- Create vocation training opportunities for women- not only basic training, but also provide support for women to create a livelihood from their new skills
- Strategize to create job opportunities without gender discrimination, to solve the problem of joblessness amongst local ethnic people

#### *(3.2.7) Recommendations for donors on economic matters*

- Select projects that create actual benefit for local ethnic people, and that support government projects
- Establish rules for businesses, e.g. businesses must use natural and human resources effectively, and not discriminate by gender. Donors should also not support business projects that only have self-interests at heart.



## (4) Gender recommendations for Security

### (4.1) Security Challenges of Women from Karenni State

The people of Karenni State want tatmadaw and the EAOs to respect and follow rules. Women are facing security challenges due to some members of armed organizations who commit VAWs. Another main challenge is the small number of women police who can help in the complaints of VAWs. Local people are also facing security issues because children are recruited by armed organizations, while local people themselves are recruited for manual labor of carrying weapons and collecting money. Since armed groups are involved in the drug trade, women are facing security challenges due to drug issues.

### (4.2) Karenni women's suggestions for respective stakeholders on security matters

#### *(4.2.1) Recommendations for government in security matters*

- Develop the 7 sectors of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, organizational security, and political security
- During times of conflict or non-conflict, armed organizations from both sides should take serious actions against VAWs
- Encourage greater participation by women in decision-making and legislating roles
- Increase the number of women in the security sector, including the police force. CEDAW conventions should be applied for these women staff (e.g. houses for women staffs in the security sector, allowing the family to come along for the trip)

#### *(4.2.2) Recommendations for Tatmadaw (military) on security matters*

- Apply and respect international conventions on women, and peace and security issues
- Avoid carrying weapons amongst the public or threatening with the weapons unnecessarily
- Enforce rules amongst its soldiers with regard to VAWs, and take serious actions against soldiers who break the rules
- VAWs should be illegal and serious actions should be taken if it is committed.
- Remove unnecessary military bases near villages in Karenni state



#### *(4.2.3) Recommendations for EAOs on security matters*

- Apply and respect international conventions on women, and peace and security issues
- Avoid carrying weapons amongst the public or threatening with the weapons unnecessarily
- Enforce rules amongst its soldiers with regard to VAWs, and take serious actions against soldiers who break the rules
- VAWs should be illegal and serious actions should be taken if it is committed

#### *(4.2.4) Recommendations for parliament on security matters*

- Develop policies that protect women based on the input of women from townships and villages
- Develop policies making it illegal for the Tatmadaw and EAOs to commit violence on the public
- The policy on military recruitment of women should be voluntary instead of compulsory



*(4.2.5) Recommendations for political parties on security matters*

- Form monitoring groups to monitor the peace process and security issues, and to present the losses of the local people to the government and parliament
- Political parties that are based in the country should support the peace process and ceasefire
- Bring justice to human rights issues, to build a sustainable peace process

*(4.2.6) Recommendations to CBOs/NGOs on security matters*

- Raise awareness on women, peace and security issues, as well as UN conventions amongst local people and stakeholders
- Raise awareness on security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
- Form monitoring groups to monitor the peace process and security issues, and to present the losses of the local people to the stakeholders
- Encourage greater participation by women in the peace process
- Coordinate between the township level and village level groups, to bring justice to women's security and human rights issues

*(4.2.7) Recommendations for donors on security matters*

- Encourage all stakeholders, including the government, to apply international conventions for women, as well as in the peace and security sectors
- Point out the large military budget allocation in the state budget, and encourage the government to spend more budget for the development of other sectors

**(5) Gender recommendations for Land and Environment****(5.1) Land and natural resource challenges faced by women in Karenni State**

Per the customary practices in Karenni State, women are facing the challenge of no possession to farm lands. Moreover, farm land registration is done by using the name of head in a family that leads to land ownership typically being in the hands of male heads in the family. There are also cases of losing land by illegal confiscation. This has a big impact on the people of Karenni State, and especially on women. Women in the rural areas are not well informed with respect to land laws and legal frameworks, which makes them particularly vulnerable.



## (5.2) Recommendations on land and natural resource matters to respective stakeholders by Karenni women

### *(5.2.1) Recommendations for government on land and natural resource matters*

- Eliminate traditional practices, in the management and allocation of land and natural resources, that marginalize and discriminate against women
- Coordinate with the defense service and armed groups in the protection of public interest, by guaranteeing no more illegal land confiscation.
- In the process of compensation for land confiscations, there should be plans designed to avoid losses sustained by women
- In the process of management and allocation of land and natural resources, there should be policies that lead to greater inclusiveness, especially with regard to women
- In drafting and amending legal frameworks related to land and natural resources, there should be gender equality
- Review current legal frameworks and regulations, and amend the process of registration that only allows for male land ownership

### *(5.2.2) Recommendations for Tatmadaw (military) on land and natural resource matters*

- Coordinate with the government and armed groups in protecting the public interest by guaranteeing no more illegal land confiscation
- Land that was illegally confiscated must be returned to local people
- Land use must be limited to essential necessities, and must otherwise be returned to local people. Compensations should be made fairly.

### *(5.2.3) Recommendations for EAOs on land and natural resource matters*

- Coordinate with the government and defense service in protecting the public interest by guaranteeing no more illegal land confiscation
- Lands that were forcefully confiscated by EAOs must be returned to local people
- Compensations on land confiscations should be made systematically, and there should be open channels to collect complaints from the public regarding to land and natural resource related issues

*(5.2.4) Recommendations for parliament on land and natural resource matters*

- Adopt up-to-date gender sensitive policies and legal frameworks on land management
- In adopting policies and legal frameworks on land management, voices of local women should be counted
- Natural resources in the region deployed for individual beneficiaries must be resolved
- All problems related to land and natural resources must be effectively resolved

*(5.2.5) Recommendations for political parties on land and natural resource matters*

- Land-related issues and problems that local people are facing should be surfaced to Members of Parliament and respective authorities, by political parties
- Party members and local people should be informed of the legal and general rules on land and natural resource issues

*(5.2.6) Recommendations for CBOs/NGOs on land and natural resource matters*

- Work with specialists and experts so that land and natural resource laws can be analyzed in the context of gender equality
- Inform local people of their legal and general rights on land and natural resource issues
- Awareness of legal and general knowledge, and international standards on preventing environmental and natural disasters should be mobilized to the local people, especially to women and youth in the community
- In adopting policies and legal frameworks on land management, local women should be encouraged to participate so that their voices can be counted

*(5.2.7) Recommendations for donor on land and natural resource matters*

- Encourage land and natural resource programs that consider the prevention of natural disasters, and that have an approach that includes gender equality
- In allocating natural resources, donors should encourage the development programs that supports good code of conduct and international standards