

The Report on the Process of Collecting the Voices of Karenni Women and Policy Brief for Peace Process



Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
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Voices of Karenni Women: Policy Brief for Peace Process

Acknowledgement

First of all, KNWO would like to express its gratitude to Karenni Women in the community, especially thanks to Kayan Women Organization (KyWO) and other local organizations which were supporting the report on the process of collecting the voices of Karenni Women and Policy Brief for peace process.

This report is the result of the collaborative efforts of the Karenni Women, the collected voices of women from the townships at the Karenni State Women's Voice Conference of the women and the compilation of the feelings and voices of Karenni people towards human rights, women's rights, gender, and peace and security in Karenni. Our deepest appreciation goes to the Norwegian People Aid through Women Engagement and participation in Peace Process Project for supporting the production of the report.

We strongly believe that it can contribute building peace in Karenni State.

Karenni National Women Organization

Introduction

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 townships¹ within Karenni state to collect the inputs and recommendations of the community (male 645, female 1115, total 1760). This took place from August-September 2016 and was carried out through discussions of human rights issue, women's participation in politics, violence against women, and gender and socio-cultural norms.

The collected voices of women from the townships were gathered and presented at the Karenni State Women's Voice Conference, which was held from 19th – 21st September 2016. The conference participants added, edited and finalized the findings. The conference participants were also divided into small groups to discuss women, peace and security issues, as well as the 5 main thematic areas included in the framework for political dialogue: political, social, economy, security, land and natural resource issues from a gendered perspective. Based on the group discussions, the participants provided recommendations for the government, tatmadaw (military), ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), parliament, political parties, NGOs/CBOs, and donor organizations.

There was a total of (440) participants (male 169, female 271) from the government, EAOs, parliament, political parties, NGOs/CBOs, INGOs and community members from 67 villages of 7 townships in Karenni State.

Based on the recommendations and result of the discussions, "Voices of Karenni Women: Policy Brief for Peace Process" was prepared and distributed to all partners, groups and local people.

¹ See detailed information of villages in annex 1

(1) The findings from the training conducted by Karenni National Women's Organization for its staff and partners

KNWO conducted awareness training for its own staff and partners at August 2016, to promote women's participation in the peace process. The training covered human rights issues, women's participation in politics, violence against women, gender and socio-cultural norms. Training participants will go on to work in local communities, leading discussions and raising awareness amongst local people. There were 10 women participants in this training.



During the training, the following were discussed: 1) topics for training and discussion in the villages; 2) documentation procedure for group discussion; 3) timetable for community visits, and 4) assignment of work responsibilities.

According to training participants, women in Karenni state are still very poor at public speaking, and there is a very low percentage of women in Karenni state who have self-confidence. Village women who understand human rights and women's rights seem to have better self-confidence. After the discussion, training participants have a better appreciation of how important community outreach awareness programmes are.

With regard to women's understanding on violence against women, it was found that most women from villages and townships are not aware of this issue. This is primarily because they accept the idea that men are the head of the household and thus, it is natural for men to discipline their wives. As such, even if they beat their wives, their wives must submit to them. In addition, there are only a few groups and organizations that protect women from violence and provide support services for the survivors. As such, their reach is limited. This also accounts for the limited knowledge on violence against women in the community.

Participants came to understand that in order to make progress, it is vital for men to be aware of violence against women and take a stand against it. Awareness of human rights and gender equality would help men treat women with respect. In other words, in order to promote women's rights, it is important to engage and cooperate with men.

After analyzing the participation of women in the peace process, it was found that women's participation is very low. Most villages do not conduct peace talks or discussions, and most women in the villages and townships lack knowledge and information on the peace process. There are only a few villages that conduct peace talks or discussions that women can participate in. As such, it is very important to increase awareness of the peace process amongst women in villages and townships.

The trainer covered the following areas: 1) gender norms; 2) gender stereotyping; 3) UDHR; 3) CEDAW; 4) UNSCR 1325, and 5) women's knowledge and awareness of the peace process. All these impact women's participation in the peace process. A discussion on each area was conducted. The trainer provided materials for discussion in villages and townships, as well as report forms for the outreach programme.

On the last day of the training, participants were divided into 5 groups and plans were made to visit all 7 townships in Karenni state. These visits were aimed at raising local people's awareness of the peace process, and collecting the voices and recommendations from each township.



(2) The feelings and voices of Karenni people towards human rights, women's issues, gender, and peace and security

After the training, KNWO staff and partners visited the 7 townships in Karenni state, and collected the voices and recommendations of the community. This was done through discussions on human rights issues, women's participation in politics,

violence against women, gender, and socio-cultural norms. A total of 1760 people (male 645, female 1115) participated in these discussions, which were held from August to September 2016.



Table (1) The list of townships and villages that participated in the discussions

Shar Daw Township	Hpruso Township	Bawlake Township	Mese Township	ParSaung Township	Demawso Township	LoiKaw Township
Salaung	Htaybar Nyar	Ywar Thit	Hose	SuSee	Kwai Ngan Ywar thit	PaLong
Shartaw Township	Markaraw Front	Su See	Hose (Myo Thit)	Khe Ma Phyu	Daw Tha Char	Kayan Kya Ku
Bay Leh	Law Bu Dah	Leh Way	Ho Kyit	Maw Chee (lower part)	Daw Bu	Zar Yat Phyu
DawLehKhu	SoLyar Kuu	WunBala	Lan Sone	LoLawHti	Htee The Kalo	Maw Htaw Khu
Daw Wah Yaw	Dar Bah	Nang Naut	Pan Tein	Maw Chee (13 hills)	Nant Meh Khone	Kyauk Taung
Nawpalu	DawLarSaw	BawLakeh	Meh Set Nam	Hpasauwng	Daw Bu Koo	Daw Se
-	Law Kyay Ku	Pawn Law	Nant Pain Lin	Wan Aung	Nazereth	Daw Par Par

2.1 The discussion on human rights

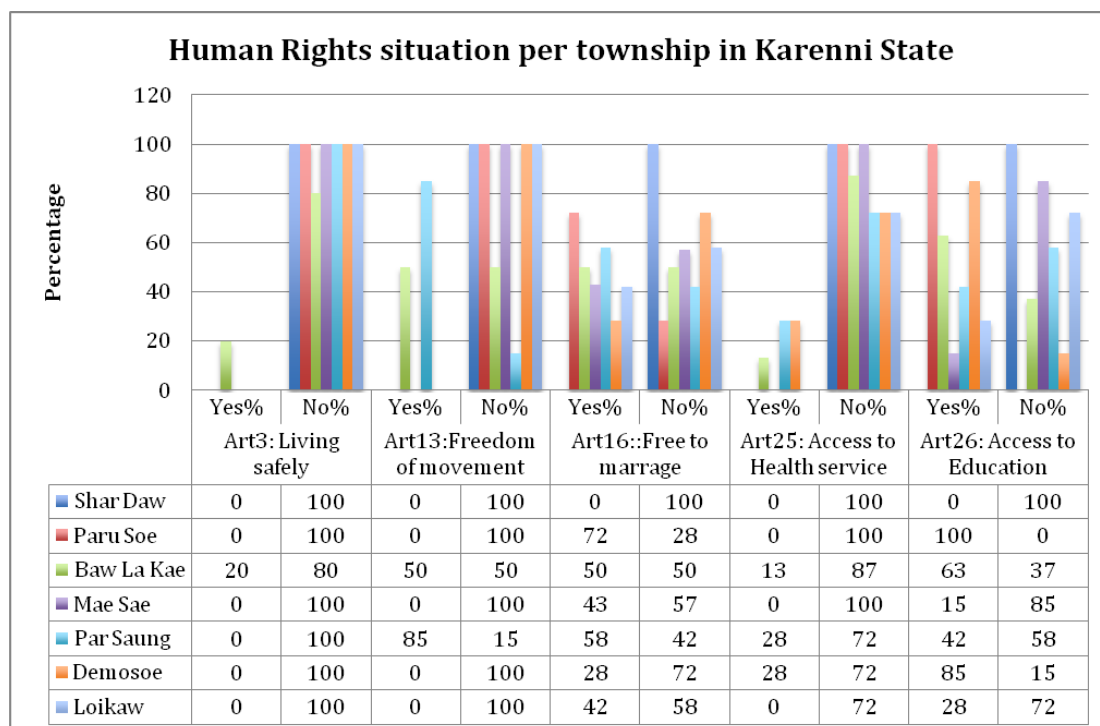
There are 30 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Of these, the 5 most relevant were chosen, and discussions on them were held with local people in the 49 villages of 7 townships.

The chosen articles are:

- Article (3) Everyone has right to life, liberty and security.
- Article (13) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- Article (16) Men and women of full age, without any limitation, due to race, nationality or religion have the right to marry and to found a family.
- Article (25) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health
- Article (26) Everyone has the right to education.

The results of the discussions are in the following table:

Picture (1) Human Rights situation by township in Karenni State



According to the results, it was found that 4 out of 5 of these rights have been widely violated. The only one which is not widely violated is Article (26), which states that everyone has the right to education. Despite this, there are still barriers to education in Karenni state's villages and townships. For example, it was found that there are insufficient teachers and textbooks in schools in Hpruso, Bawlake, Hpasauwng, and Demawso. In addition, some villages in Shar Daw, Mese, and Loikaw do not even have primary schools. There are also no schools for children with disabilities.

In addition, certain practices in schools challenge gender equality. For example, only male students are allowed to be leaders and in the Student Council. Teachers, both male and female, only assign female students for the positions of treasurer and accountant. Furthermore, as there is no school in some villages, parents only allow their sons to continue high school education. Girls are taken out of school to do housework and look after younger siblings. As such, there is a great need to carry out awareness programmes. There is also a great need to provide policy support for teachers, on how to delegate responsibilities with gender equality. Furthermore, there is a need to educate parents on the importance of supporting their daughters' education.

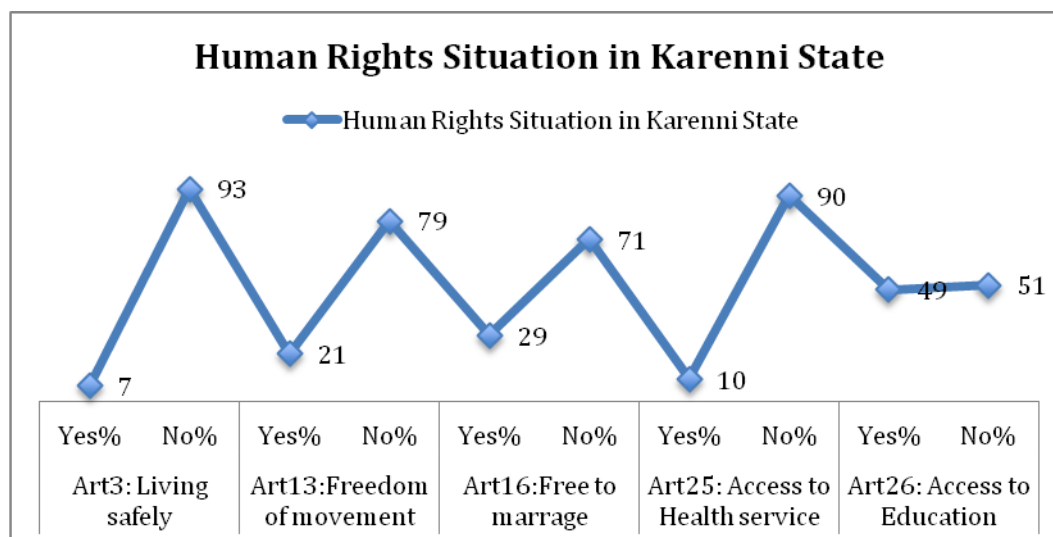
Article (3) states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security. 20% of the participants from Baw La Kaw said that they have rights to life and liberty, but 80% said that they have rights to life, but there is no security. In addition, 100% of the participants from the other 6 townships said that they do not have security. Their main reason for not feeling secure is that they live in anxiety and fear. Women, in particular, have to worry about physical and sexual violence. From the results, participants perceive that men are safer, as they are stereotyped as strong and can fight back against danger. It is recommended that women's rights and security issues are addressed together in the future, as women are insecure because of their gender.

Article (13) states that everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. It was found that there are different levels of challenges to this right in different townships. For example, there are only some challenges to this right in Bawlake and Hpasauwng, but 100% challenge in Shar Daw, Hpruso, Mae Saw, Demawso, and Loikaw. This is because during and after conflicts, local people had to flee to the borders for their security. As such, they might leave behind their identity card, Form 10, birth certificate and motorcycle license. When local people do not have these documents, travelling freely within Myanmar becomes a challenge. There are many bamboo gates (for checking and tax collection) when traveling from one village to another, and these are guarded by security personnel either from the government or armed groups. When women travel, they are verbally harassed and asked unnecessary questions that make them uncomfortable. For men, if they run into the army, they might be forced to be porters. Therefore, it is important that the right to freedom of movement be discussed at political dialogues. A policy that could solve these challenges effectively should also be produced.

Article (16) states that men and women of full age, without any limitation, due to race, nationality or religion have the right to marry and to found a family. Aside from Shar Daw and Demawso, the other 5 townships do not have many challenges in this area. However, when the challenges that women and men face are compared, it is found that women have more challenges. This is because men can refuse an arranged marriage without giving many reasons, while this is not true for women. Women cannot say no to marriage and often have to give up education for marriage. As such, there needs to be more awareness on human rights and gender equality in Karenni state.

Article (25) states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health. However, it was found that there are inadequate medical services in all 7 townships. As there are insufficient clinics, hospitals, medical staff, and resources in rural areas, women in particular face many problems. There is very limited knowledge on reproductive health and inadequate prenatal services. The government should tackle these health issues seriously and effectively.

Picture (2) Human Rights Situation in Karenni State



In conclusion, aside from right to education, all the other human rights are being challenged in Karenni state. The government, tatmandaw (military), ethnic armed organizations, parliament, political parties, civil society organizations, and donors have to work together to ensure that Karenni people have all the basic rights. It is recommended that gender equality be prioritized to ensure human rights for everyone.

2.2 The discussion on women's rights with regard to CEDAW

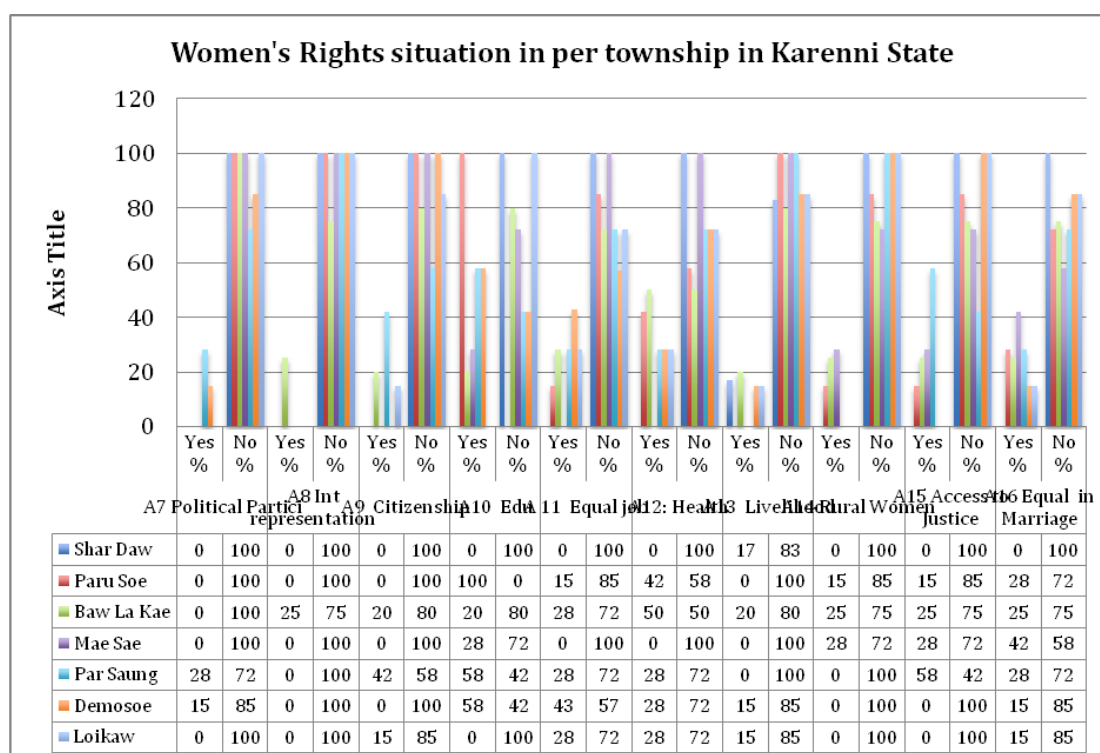
The women's rights situation was discussed with the local people in 7 townships, using CEDAW Articles (7-16) as a reference. Article (10) states that women have equal rights with men in the field of education. 41% of the participants indicated that they have equal rights in this area, while 55% indicated that they do not. With regard to the other Articles, at least 75% indicated that they are unable to exercise these rights.

The chosen articles are:

- Article (7) States shall ensure that women have equal rights with men to vote, hold public office and participate in civil society.
- Article (8) States shall ensure that women are allowed to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.
- Article (9) States shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and also equal rights in respect of their children's nationality.
- Article (10) States shall ensure that women have equal rights with men in education, including equal access to schools, vocational training, curricula and educational resources. States shall eliminate stereotypes of the roles of women and men through revising school materials and teaching methods.

- Article (11) States shall ensure that women have the same opportunities as men in employment, promotion, training, equal remuneration, social security and safe working conditions. Women must also be protected in respect of pregnancy, maternity and marital status.
- Article (12) States shall ensure that women have equal rights with men to access healthcare services, including reproductive health services.
- Article (13) States shall ensure that women have equal rights with men to family benefits, bank loans and other forms of financial credit. Women must also be allowed to participate equally in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.
- Article (14) States shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas so that they can participate in and benefit from healthcare, education, social security, development planning etc equally with men.
- Article (15) States shall ensure that women and men are treated equally before the law. Women have the same legal right to enter contracts, own property and choose their place of residence.
- Article (16) States shall ensure that women have equal rights with men in relation to marriage and as parents, as well as in respect of other aspects of family life.

Picture (3) Women's rights situation by township in Karenni State



Article (7) states that women should have equal rights with men to vote, hold public office and participate in civil society. 95% of the participants from the 7 townships indicated that they do not have this right, and only 5% think that women can participate in politics and decision-making. In Shar Daw, Hpruso, Bawlake, Mese, and

Loikaw, 100% of the participants think that women do not have the right to participate in politics and decision-making. There is gender discrimination in villages. For example, women are not invited to village meetings, and women cannot apply for the village head position. The stereotypical idea that only men can be the household head and village leader is deeply rooted. The fact that women cannot speak Burmese very well, and have limited experience reinforce the thinking that women should not be in leadership positions. Women's voices are not heard, and this in turn creates greater challenges for their participation in politics. In Mese, women were not able to vote as they did not have ID cards. Though women from these townships are able to participate in politics, they have very few chances to be involved in the decision-making process. As such, it is important to conduct more awareness programmes to encourage women to participate in politics and to eliminate gender discrimination in this area.



Article (8) states that women should be allowed to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations. Participants from all 7 townships indicated that they do not have this right. Participants from Mese village said that women have had to focus on their security during the long civil war in Myanmar. As such, they only have limited knowledge about politics. The local people have the idea that women should not be involved in politics because it is very dangerous- they could be arrested at any time. This does not just apply at the international or national level, but also at the village level. For the people living along the Thai-Myanmar border and in the refugee camps, they are precluded from participating in politics at the national and international levels. Participants from Mese suggested that the government provide more support for

women to participate in government. They also suggested capacity-building programmes for women, to give them the ability and chance to speak out in public. In addition, they suggested the formation of women's groups and networks, that connect with other women's networks at the regional and state levels. In this way, women can connect with international networks and there will be more women representatives in the country.

Article (9) states that women should have equal rights when it comes to acquiring, changing or retaining their nationality. 42% of the participants from Hpasauwng indicated that both men and women have equal rights in this area. Participants from the other 6 townships indicated that they do not have equal rights in this area. The biggest challenge is the fact that most people in the refugee camps were born in the border areas during the conflict. As such, they do not have birth certificates and are unable to get legal documents. If they want to gain nationality, they have to sit for a test at the government office. Most women are afraid to go to the government office due to the language barrier and the fact that they lack general knowledge. These people face difficulties when they need to move from village to village to make a living- village administrators take a long time to provide the necessary documents and the people do not have the chance to explain their situation. In order to solve these problems, the government should relax the time limits for issuance of birth certificates. The government should also make the process of acquiring birth certificates, national identity cards, and family registration smoother and easier. There should also be awareness programmes on citizenship, citizen rights, and related legal knowledge.

Article (10) states that women should have equal rights in education, including access to schools, vocational training, curricula and educational resources. It also states that stereotypes of the roles of men and women should be eliminated through the revision of school materials and teaching methods. From the results, it is clear that there is no equal opportunity for education in Shar Daw, Loikaw, Bawlake, and Mese. Girls are not given a chance to finish highschool as they are taken out of school to help in housework. As such, it is important to educate parents about gender discrimination. In Hpruso, Hpasauwng, and Demawso, there is no gender discrimination with regard to education, but some children are not interested in it. The government should make the education system better, and provide financial support for girls to finish their education. In addition, the government should provide sufficient schools, and sufficient resources (e.g. teachers, furniture, and toilets) for the schools.

Article (11) states that women should have the same opportunities as men when it comes to employment, promotion, training, remuneration, social security and safe working conditions. 43% of the participants from Demawso indicated that they have equal rights for employment, while 57% of participants from the other 6 townships indicated that they do not have equal rights for employment, employment opportunities, and safe working environment. Men have more opportunities and earn more than women, while women do not even have security at work. Participants feel that women should ask for equal job opportunities, and that the

government should create safe working conditions for women. They also suggested that a savings and loan system be put in place in villages, factories and work places., as this will help create jobs. Both employees and employers should have legal awareness.

Article (12) states that women should have equal access to healthcare services, including reproductive health services. 50% of the participants from Hpruso and Bawlake indicated that they do not have equal access to healthcare services, while other townships indicated that they do not have equal healthcare services. There are insufficient clinics, hospitals and healthcare service providers. As such, people are unable to receive proper treatment in major cases. There is also insufficient prenatal care and a lack of awareness about reproductive health and birth spacing. Women in particular are reluctant to discuss reproductive health. The recommendations are to have sufficient clinics, hospitals, and full-time healthcare staff, and to increase health awareness, including educating men about reproductive health. Health kits should also be provided to villages.

Article (13) states that women should have equal rights with men to family benefits, bank loans and other forms of financial credit. Participants from the 7 townships indicated that they do not have equal rights and opportunities in this area. This is due to the lack of economic opportunities in the area. It is also harder for women to get jobs and do business, due to the existing norms which discriminate against women. Traditionally, only men should do business, and women should not travel alone- necessary for business. This leads to a lack of confidence amongst women, with regard to their ability to do business. The difficulty that local people have with regard to travelling and transportation also has a negative impact on business and trade. The government should implement vocational training, savings and loan programmes, laws for gender equality, and create job opportunities and a safe working environment for women.

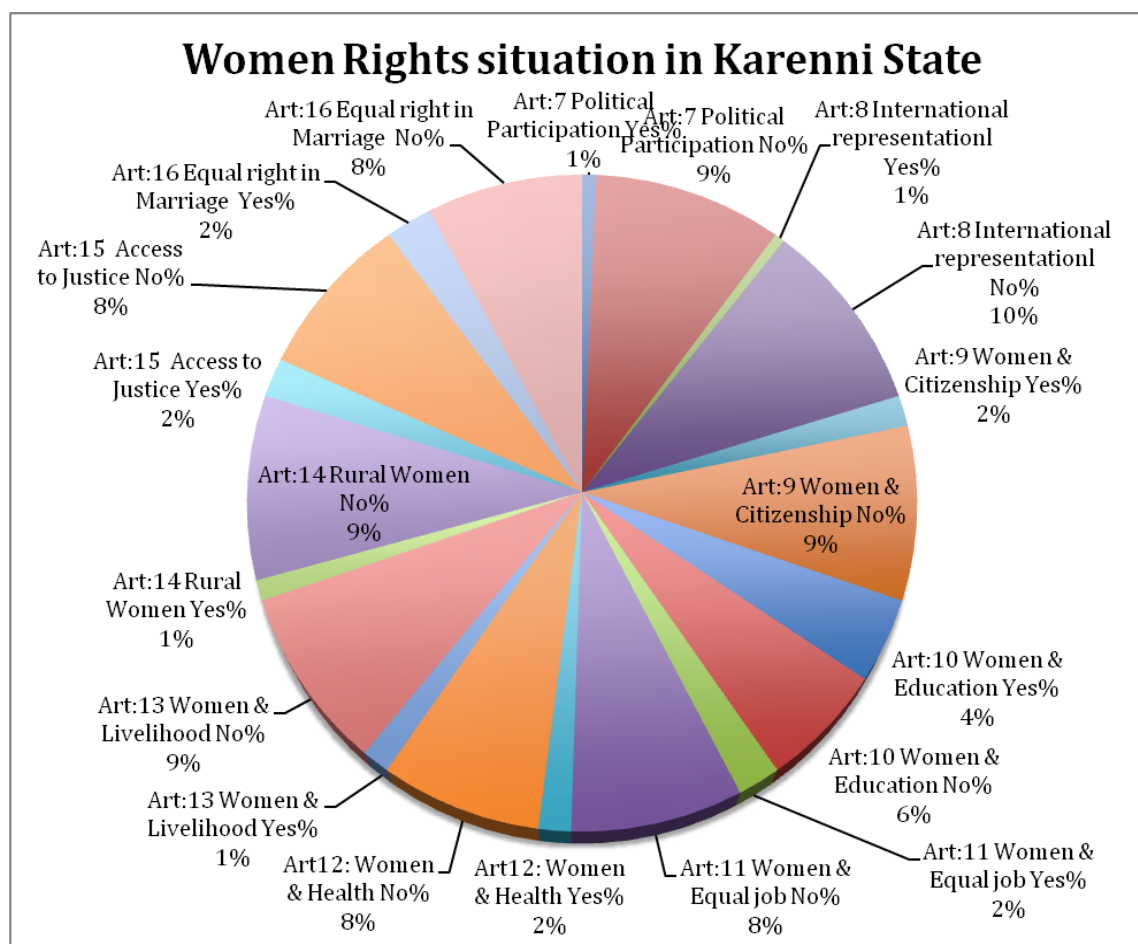
Article (14) states that discrimination against women in rural areas should be eliminated, so that they can participate in and benefit from healthcare, education, social security, development planning etc. 100% of the participants from Shar Daw, Hpasauwng, Demawso and Loikaw indicated that this is very much needed for the development of rural women. Other townships also indicated that more development is needed and that there is a lot of discrimination. For example, women are not allowed to participate in village meetings. Women's abilities and capacities are not recognized, due to gender stereotyping. There are few capacity-building training programmes for women in the villages. Examples of such programmes are: computer training, English training, and handicraft training. Girls are unable to complete highschool as they are taken out of school, some as early as middle school, to look after their younger siblings. Participants suggested that the government implement projects aimed at rural women's development. For example,

awareness programmes on gender equality and women's rights, educational radio programmes in local ethnic languages, involvement of women in village meetings, and a law on gender equality.

Article (15) states that women and men are equal before the law. 58% of the participants from Hpasauwng indicated that they have equality in this area, while 42% indicated that they do not. Other townships also indicated that they do not have equality in this area. If a man is arrested, if he is rich enough, he can offer a bribe and regain his freedom. If a woman is arrested, even if it is a case of injustice, there is a low chance of the case being settled in a just manner. Very few women actually appear in court, as cases involving women are often settled in the traditional way. Some traditional customs are gender discriminatory, and this leads to violations of women's rights. The government should form groups for the legal protection of victims at the village level. Law enforcement officials and courts should also be unbiased- women should be respected, trusted, and listened to. In addition, there should be legal awareness programmes for women.

Article (16) states that women should have equal rights with men in relation to marriage and other aspects of family life. 42% of the participants from Mese indicated that they have equal rights in this area, but 58% indicated that they do not. Other townships also indicated that they do not have equal rights in this area. When a man asks for divorce, it is immediately granted. However, women are not given the same treatment. If a man wants to leave his wife, he can easily relocate without signing divorce papers or paying compensation. Women do not have the ability to do this. Arranged marriages compound the gender inequality. In addition, some traditional customs related to divorce discriminate against women. As such, there should be more legal awareness on marriage and divorce. As women are more vulnerable than men, they should be entitled to greater compensation in cases of divorce. Justice and mutual understanding are of great importance.

Picture (4) Women's rights situation in Karenni State



According to the above chart, 41% of participants indicate that women have equal access to education. However, a very low percentage indicates that women have equal rights in the other areas. The lack of government services, gender discrimination, existing gender norms based on stereotypes, as well as limited knowledge on women's rights contribute to this situation. The government should respect, protect, and promote women's rights, in order for women to exercise all their rights as enshrined in CEDAW.

2.3 The situation of violence against women



The situation of violence against women in villages was discussed. It was found that the most common type of violence in Shar Daw, Bawlake, Hpasauwng, and Loikaw is rape, while in the other townships, physical and mental violence indirectly supported by harmful traditional norms are the most common.

The fact that there is no rule of law and very little legal awareness amongst the people contribute to this situation. In addition, traditional norms regard women as weak and do not foster respect for women. There are also other supporting factors that lead to this situation: financial difficulties, drug and alcohol abuse, and family problems. Women are also easily taken advantage of when travelling alone, or when alone at home.

There are not many organizations working to prevent violence against women. It was found that the following groups are giving assistance and help in several areas: religious leaders, village elders, youth leaders, KNWO, Future Women Association, Women Affairs, and Law Home groups.

Prevention of Violence

Women's groups provide training on women's rights, relevant laws, and violence against women. However, they are still weak with regard to rule of law, and taking action against those who commit violence against women.

As such, strengthening the rule of law is very important. Analysis from the gender perspective and awareness raising should be carried out, to ensure gender equality and to prevent violence against women.

Protection for victims of violence

Most of the cases involving violence are handled by village administrators with the help of women's organizations such as KNWO. However, it was found that there is insufficient support for related services- healthcare, socio-psychological support, legal support, and financial support. The government and non-governmental organizations should work more closely together to provide effective services.

3. Karenni State Women's Voice Conference



The Karenni State Women's Voice Conference, led by KNWO, was held from 19th – 21st September 2016. During this conference, the voices of the community were collected, confirmed, and discussed. Five main thematic areas of the political dialogue framework (politics, social, economic, security, land and environmental) were discussed from the gender equality perspective. Based on the results of this discussion, recommendations were discussed and made, for the government, tatmandaw (military), ethnic armed organizations, parliament, political parties, NGOs/CBOs, and donor organizations.

On the last day of the conference, the statement on the conference was issued, and the paper, "Voices of Karenni Women: Policy Brief for Peace Process" was prepared and disseminated to the groups concerned. For more details, please refer to the policy brief paper.

(4) Conclusion

It is KNWO's honour to implement this entire process: raising awareness on human rights, women's rights, gender equality issues in local communities, and conducting discussions to collect their voices, and then advocating for them to the relevant authorities. KNWO recommends that this entire process be carried out once or twice annually, if possible. In addition, monitoring the effectiveness of the policy brief on political dialogue should also be carried out.



Annex 1: Voices of Karenni Women: Policy Brief for Peace Process

Voices of Karenni Women: Policy Brief for Peace Process



Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)

September 2016

Voices of Karenni Women

Policy Brief for Peace



Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
September 2016

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- 5) Gender Recommendations for Land and Environment**

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 15th October 2015.

It prepared to conduct national level political dialogue based on ethnic, region and issues after the 21st 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 townships² 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 19th–21st 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, NGO/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.

² 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 21st 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

About KNWO

KNWO is a Community Based Organization which was re-instituted on March 10, 1993 by concerned women individuals to organize women refugees who had fled their homes to seek asylum along the Thai-Burma border in Mae Hong Son, North West of Thailand. KNWO has gained recognition as a lead organization to promote, protect and safeguard the well being of women in Karenni State, Burma.