

KWO Three Year Report for 2014, 2015 and 2016





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Karen Women's Organization
(KWO)



Three Year Report

KWO 2014, 2015 & 2016

THREE YEAR REPORT

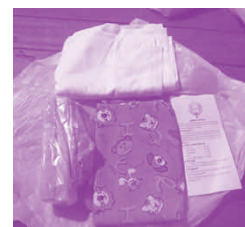
A selection of figures from some of our projects:

6,087 children were supported through **KWO Nursery schools in 2014; 5,939 in 2015** and **5,693 in 2016.**

Nursery schools are in 6 districts of Karen State, 2 refugee camps in Thailand, and Ee Tu Hta IDP camp.



11,194 Baby kits were distributed to women in 2014, 2015 and 2016 by KWO. These were distributed across the 7 districts of Karen State and in Ee Tu Hta IDP camp, Karen State.



28 young women **graduated** from KWO's **KYWLS in 2014**
18 graduated in 2015.
26 graduated in 2016.



Every year KWO runs activities centering on the International Campaign *16 days of Activism to End Violence Against Women*. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 all together 41,022 men and women were engaged in these actions.





Villages gathered for KWO day, 2014

ABOUT KWO

The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) was formed in 1949 and currently has a membership of more than 60,000 women. KWO is a community-based organization of Karen women working in development and relief in the refugee camps on the Thai border and with IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) inside Burma.

KWO Vision:

In a federal Burma, all communities have gender equality, the protection and promotion of indigenous people's rights, human rights, and justice.

KWO Mission:

KWO is an ethnic women's community-based organization that empowers women so they have capacity and power to solve their own problems and participate in decision-making that will affect their lives.

KWO participates in the struggle to stop all kinds of oppression of women and of children and provides support for communities in the Thai-Burma border and in Karen State, Burma.

KWO Goals:

- 1) Ensure that KWO is an organization which is strong, sustainable, effective and healthy.
- 2) Karen women are free from any kind of oppression and enjoy an adequate standard of living.
- 3) Karen women have gender equality in all spheres of life at all levels.
- 4) Karen women are encouraged to participate in political leadership at different levels and work together to achieve federalism.
- 5) In our community, our people, especially women and children, can practice and enjoy full indigenous rights.

KWO organizes our Project work under 4 broad programs;

(1) Education

- Karen Young Women's Leadership School(KYWLS)
- Early Childhood Nursery School Project
- Special Education Project
- Dormitory for Student Access to Education

(2) Health

- Baby Kits Project
- Traditional Birth Attendant training and support Project

(3) Social Welfare

- Safe Houses and Women's Protection Strengthening women survivors of violence Project
- Income Generation Project

(4) Organizing and information sharing

- Creating Peace
- Capacity Building
- Women's Voices and Resource Centres
- Camp Support

KWO's work takes place across the seven districts of Karen State, in the IDP camp of Ee Tu Hta and in 7 Karen refugee camps in Thailand near the Thai/ Burma border



MESSAGE FROM KWO'S SECRETARY NAW K'NYAW PAW

The past 3 years have been remarkable for Karen Women's Organization (KWO) and for the people of Burma.

In Burma's nationwide election in November 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won an outright majority of seats across the Assembly of the Union (combined term for the Upper and Lower Houses). With the power of the military finally reduced with the selection of a popularly approved Government, there is an expectation of changes to come. We hope that the new government will be able to start the process of rebuilding the nation, despite the restraints imposed by the 2008 constitution and the significant role that the military still plays in governance. We believe that the new government will strive to end the conflict in the ethnic areas, work with the ethnic people to build a federal country and increase women's participation in decision making in the country. However,

"We recognize that change requires a prolonged and sustained effort"

Naw K'nyaw Paw on the occasion
of speaking to the United Nations
Security Council on Violence
Against Women, 2014

we recognize that change requires a prolonged and sustained effort and that the fledgling peace process remains fraught and fragile throughout the country. KWO will continue our efforts to provide services to women and children, while advocating for protection and the participation of women.

Throughout these three years, KWO has continued to manage our projects and other core work under our four program areas: Health, Education, Social Welfare, and Organizing and Information Sharing, while addressing urgent advocacy and protection issues that arose throughout the year. KWO has had many successes in 2014, 2015 and 2016, which have directly benefitted the lives of thousands of Karen women.

Several of our programs that had previously been focused in the refugee camps were able to extend into Karen State, Burma. Our women's protection program expanded into Karen State to assist victims of sexual and gender based violence, as well as conducting awareness raising in 6 districts. Our Special Education project opened a pilot site in Ee Tu Hta IDP camp. In order to strengthen our work in Karen State, field offices in Hpa An and Hokay were established and district office buildings were set up to support the ongoing work of women in KWO in each district.

We have also faced many challenges over these past years, including the lack of women's participation in the peace process, advocating for justice for women victims of violence and a lack of adequate community participation in refugee return planning and negotiations.



Community Capacity Building Training, 2014

NAW K'NYAW PAW (*continued*)

In November 2015, KWO launched the report, *“Salt in The Wound: Justice Outcomes and SGBV cases in Karen Refugee Camps 2011-13”*. The research presented in the report highlights the ongoing lack of justice in the camps for women victims of violence. KWO is continuing to use this report to advocate for improvements in justice and services to women survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

KWO's Creating Peace Project implemented further activities during these years aimed at empowering women leaders and decision-makers and keeping the community informed about the peace negotiations, ceasefire talks, and refugee return planning. Women have been almost completely left out at every stage of the ceasefire and political negotiations, despite UN recognition that women's participation is essential for sustainable solutions to peace, through the UN Security Resolution 1325.

The ceasefire negotiations of 2014 and 2015 promised hope for a new peaceful phase in Burma's history, however the process was divisive and subverted attempts to allow the united ethnic voices to negotiate with the powerful military government. At the same time the Burma Army attacks on ethnic states continued, causing heavy casualties and mass displacement in Kachin and Shan State, with outbreaks of fighting in Karen State as well. The continued conflict has only increased distrust in the peace process. The position of the ethnic organisations was weakened by the rift between those who signed the NCA and those who didn't. KWO

KWO Traditional Role

KWO's traditional role in our community is essentially one of community care-giving, but it is not limited to that. Our traditional role can be divided into 2 main types of work: we provide services, and we do advocacy for change. The services that we provide cover a variety of sectors with a focus on community and family care giving, education, and support for individuals and groups who are in trouble. The advocacy work focuses on getting more women into decision making positions in our community, and if there are no women present, then trying to influence those decision making processes through advocacy. We work hard to increase the voice and capacity of women in our community. In a free, peaceful country much of KWO's traditional role would be played by the local government's civil services. The types of infrastructure, resources, policies, and community services that are needed and provided by any local government are similar to those that KWO is required to try and achieve in our land and in the refugee camps but we are all constrained by the effects of war, poverty and systematic Human Rights violations.

MESSAGE FROM KWO'S SECRETARY

NAW K'NYAW PAW (*continued*)

works very hard with all ethnic groups including women's groups to maintain unity, which we believe is essential to achieving a lasting peace. We continue to fight for the inclusion of civil society and women in ceasefire negotiations, particularly amplifying the voices of ethnic people. The Karen Peace Support Network(KPSN), a large alliance of Karen Civil Society Organisations in Burma, of which KWO is a member, has been a valuable tool in this struggle.

Since 2010, discussions about preparation for refugee return planning have increased. At the same time, there have been reductions in funding for basic services to refugees living in the camps, including severe cuts to food rations and to education and health services. Many of the INGOs who have been working in the camps have shifted their focus to programs inside Burma. Donors have increased their support to ,

“KWO worked very hard to work with all ethnic groups including women's groups to maintain unity, which we believe is essential to lasting peace”

organisations inside Burma and reduced their funds to border and refugee organisations, although there has not been any significant reduction in the refugee population.

We are proud of the extensive work we do in and with our Community, and strive to continue to strengthen our projects for the benefit of civil society. Contextually, it is also our hope that the ceasefire negotiations, refugee return preparedness and development inside Karen State will progress with the full involvement of our people in order to achieve genuine community participation for a better future of the Karen people, ethnic groups, and all of Burma.



Naw K'nyaw Paw, KWO Secretary



Karen traditional weaving, KWO Karen culture promotional event

ORGANISING AND INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM

Projects under this Program:

1. Creating Peace Project,
2. Capacity Building Project,
3. Women's Voice and Resource Centres Project;
4. Camp Support Project

Creating Peace Project

Women's participation in the peace process and politics:

KWO has provided education about the peace process and refugee return to at least 25,000 community members each year (2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively) in Karen State and in refugee camps.

KWO has been part of the struggle for peace in Burma since we were formed. With the Women's League of Burma (WLB), we have been implementing a peace-building program since 2000. In response to the ceasefire agreements, the elections and the fledgling peace process, KWO has increased our work in this area.

There is a well-documented lack of women participating in both the peace process and the political process in Burma. KWO's work is targeted at addressing these inequalities by building the capacity of women to be able to participate, as well as advocating for a space for women at the negotiations.

KWO Structure

Each position and committee in KWO's organisational structure, from the village level to the Congress, has a specific set of duties, procedures and authority that is laid down in our Constitution. This is supported by many more KWO policies and documents that have been developed over the years to help guide and standardise our decision-making, planning and daily work.

The KWO Congress, held every 4 years, has the highest decision-making power in KWO and is the only time we can make any changes to the KWO Constitution. It is also when we hold elections for the more senior management levels. At Congress we lay down aims and strategies for the organization's program for the coming 4 years. The 11 member Executive Committee (EC) are then mandated to implement that program.

ORGANISING AND INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

“The low levels of women’s participation in the ceasefire talks at the national and state levels are indicative of the parlous status of women in Myanmar. At October 2015, the Union Peace-making Working Committee (UPWC) was male dominated entity with two women amongst 52 members; the Union Peacemaking Central Committee (UPCC) had 11 members, all men.”

- APIGG Policy Briefing

To support and extend our peace-building work, KWO established a dedicated project in 2013, titled: Creating Peace Project. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 we focused on increasing skills, capacity and understanding among women leaders and community members. To achieve genuine and sustainable peace KWO believes we need an empowered, well-informed community, skilled women leaders and resources available to support their efforts. We encourage participants in this work to make their voices heard, in their own way, and to maximize on opportunities for participation.

Our short training workshops and information sharing sessions in Karen State focus on topics including: “Women in Peace” “CEDAW ” “UNSR 1325” “Geneva Call Commitments” “the Peace Process” “Democracy” “Human Rights” “Rights of Refugees” “Refugee Return” and “Gender Awareness”. 40 women have been trained each year as trainers. 500 to 1,000 women leaders have participated each year in workshops and information sharing sessions, and at least 3,000 community members annually.

To inform KWO’s advocacy efforts, to ensure concerns from our community are raised, and to guide our own peace work, we conducted large Community Consultations in Karen State every year in several sites. About 1,000 community members took part each year, both men and women, and KWO has used our advocacy work at local, national and international levels to amplify the concerns and demands of the people.

Each year we have faced significant funding shortfalls, and like many ethnic women’s groups we have not received any of the billions of dollars pouring into Rangoon from the International community to the Burmese Government to support the Peace Process.

- Advocating for Women’s Quota

KWO is a founding member of the Women’s League of Burma (WLB). KWO, together with WLB has been pushing ethnic armed organisations and the government of Burma to promote a women’s quota for political parties and within the peace process.

KWO is part of the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), and consistently ensures that women’s participation is on the agenda and part of the key recommendations of the Network.

KWO is part of the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Centre (ENAC) where together with other ethnic CSOs we ensure that policy recommendations for women’s quotas are included.

- Other Peace Work:

Mega Development Projects: the New Conflict

Since the beginning of the peace process, the Country has been opened up to investment and development projects. In many cases, these create a new cause of



KWO Organization Trip to Umpiem Camp, 2015

conflict and displacement in the ethnic areas of Burma. KWO believes that peace has to focus on rebuilding peace within communities. The increase in big development projects, the troop build up which often accompanies these projects and resulting land confiscation are ruining the livelihoods of many, accompanied by further human rights abuses. Therefore KWO works together with its networks to highlight the problems caused by mega development projects in the area. A key focus of their work in the last three years has been the Stop the Salween Dam project.

Women's Rights and National Laws

In 2015, the Burmese Government passed the 4 bills that comprise the Protection of Race and Religion Law. The law imposes severe restrictions on women's reproductive rights, religious freedom and right to marry. KWO continues to join other civil society groups asking for this law to be over-turned.

- Capacity Building Project

This project has been elaborated on in the Education Program section, so that connections can be drawn with other work to enhance skill and empower women to take active leadership roles.

'As of 2014 in the General Administrative Dept., the face of government in rural Myanmar, 17 of 15,972 ward/village tract administrators are female, and there are no female administrators for the Country's 330 townships.

The elections in November 2015 doubled the number of women in elected positions but it is still very low. There are now just 64 elected women MP's across both the upper and lower house. That's less than 10% of the total number of seats. It has been under 5% after the 2012 elections.'

- From KWO Pamphlet produced for International Women's Day 2016



ORGANISING AND INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM *(CONTINUED)*

ORGANISING AND INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM

- Women's Voice and Resource Centres Project
- Camp Support Project

- Women's Voice and Resource Centres Project

The “Women's Voice and Resource Centres Project” supports KWO's core programming and permits us to run and manage the whole organization and many of our activities. Two main Resource Centres and three smaller Contact Points, provide space and resources for all the KWO projects including hosting staff, meetings, fund-raising, training, and the day-to-day work. This is where policies for women's empowerment and protection are developed, finalized, and evaluated. They are places where connections are made between local women and people from outside our community. Donors, journalists, and visitors are informed and educated about refugees, Karen women, Burma and the peace process and about our culture and community. Women leaders advocate for the needs in our community, including refugee and IDP issues. From these Centres, we organize and mobilize women in the 7 Karen-majority refugee camps and in 7 districts in Karen State, Burma; we raise awareness in the community about peace, we work to stop violence against women, and we push for gender equality. More than 100 women leaders, staff, interns and volunteers have been working and living in the Centers each year for the past 3 years. The Women's Voice and Resource Centre Project gives direct benefit to more than 60,000 KWO members and their families, and many thousands of people in the wider Karen community.

- Camp Support Project

The “Camp Support Project” provides practical support to at least 300 women community managers living in the refugee camps each year. Through this direct support, which includes a basic monthly stipend, refugee women participate more actively in community decision-making, and the community benefits from having women in positions where they can influence and manage services and policies. The women are all elected to their positions by the community and receive training and resources to work. The women do important work in the community each day including directly providing social and care services to the most vulnerable members of the community, promoting environmental protection, good health and sanitation, overseeing and supporting KWO Projects and project staff, organizing local actions, engaging with local governance structures, NGOs and CBOs, and advocating for better outcomes for women and children in justice proceedings.



Karen State, picture taken on a district consultation trip by KWO Staff, 2014

REFUGEE RETURN SECTION CONTAINS:

- Situation in the Camps
- KWO position on refugee return
- Community Consultation
- Closure of Ee Tu Hta
- Next Steps

REFUGEE RETURN ISSUE

- Situation in the Camps:

The population in the refugee camps, was 103,762 as of August 2016. As the peace process has progressed, talk of refugee return, has increased with much attention on preparing refugees for return. Those living in the camp face uncertain futures, often lacking the information they need to understand the plans and decisions that affect them. At the same time, international donors are withdrawing their funds for the camps and residents in the camp have faced a series of ration cuts, education funding cuts and cuts to health services. The communities are vulnerable and stressed, and there appears to have been increases in suicide and violence in the camps.

- KWO Position on Refugee Return:

KWO has thousands of members in the camps, serves thousands of beneficiaries and works with hundreds of staff. Through this network, KWO is constantly consulting with the camp population and advocates for minimum international standards to be met on refugee return:

- * Returns should only take place in safety and dignity.
- * The process must be community led, with full refugee participation in decision making at all levels.
- * Improved information dissemination across the community on decisions and

*"I fled our village in
Karen State with the
house burning and took
my children out of it.
Now, as a mother I don't
want to take my children
back to a burning house.
Many houses in Burma
are still burning"*

*Mother from Karen
State, 2016*

REFUGEE RETURN ISSUE (CONTINUED)



Young woman at KWO
meeting , 2014

discussions affecting the lives of refugees

- * Women must be involved at every step of the process.

In 2014 and 2015, KWO released a briefing paper on refugee return in Karen and English. These papers highlighted the rights of refugees to voluntary, safe return, as well as making specific recommendations on material, legal and physical security and refugee participation in the process. In 2016 we highlighted in our KWO 6 month update, “Through the Eyes of Women” the continued fears of the community in relation to premature repatriation.

- Consulting with Communities on both sides of the border

In Karen State, KWO also regularly consults with communities about the return of refugees and the impact on villagers in Karen State. Villagers in Karen State have reported their concerns about the lack of transparency around planning for refugee return. This includes:

- * lack of consultation about camps for refugees returning where the Burmese Government has confiscated land from the communities in order to establish the sites
- * fears that support for refugees will be insufficient and that the already scarce local resources will become even more over-stretched
- * that there is inadequate health and education services for the existing population
- * lack of security due to increased militarization, landmines and ongoing land confiscation.

“Those living in the camp face uncertain futures, often lacking the information they need to understand the plans and decisions that affect them”

“The timing for refugee return will not be right until the conditions which have led the refugees to flee Burma over the past 30 years are resolved.”

KWO Statement for World
Refugee Day, released June 2015

- Preparation for Closure of Ee Tu Hta IDP Camp:

Support for IDPS in Ee Tu Hta will stop at the end of August 2017. The Border Consortium (TBC), the main provider of basic food items for the camp, will cease to provide food rations after this date. KWO has been providing technical support to the Karen community at Ee Htu Hta on how to manage this shift. It is estimated that around 50% of the community will return to their villages of origin if they are secure enough, with the remainder of the residents electing to stay at the ETH location. Ee Tu Hta was established in 2006. It developed as a result of people fleeing fighting between the Burmese Army and the Karen National Liberation Army in Taungoo and Nyaung Lay Bin.

- World Refugee Day: Every year, KWO together with other camp-based organisations has campaigned to highlight the plight of refugees. Campaigns have been held around the following themes:
 - * In 2014, With courage let us combine
 - * In 2015, Migrants and Refugees: towards a better world
 - * In 2016, We stand together with refugees



Young boys in Karen State, near Salween River

SOCIAL WELFARE PRORAM CONTAINS:

- Safe Houses and Women's Protection Project
- Salt in the Wound Report
- 16 days of Activism
- Strengthening the movement of women survivors of violence project
- Income Generation Project
- Next steps

SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM

Projects under this program:

1. Safe Houses and Women's Protection Project,
2. Strengthening the movement of women survivors of violence Project,
3. Income Generation Project

Preventing and Responding to SGBV

KWO is the leading community-based provider of care, refuge and awareness to women and children in the 7 refugee camps and in Karen State, including victims of SGBV. Women in trouble in the Karen community have always been given shelter in the homes of KWO members and leaders. In 2001, KWO opened the first safe houses in the refugee camps.

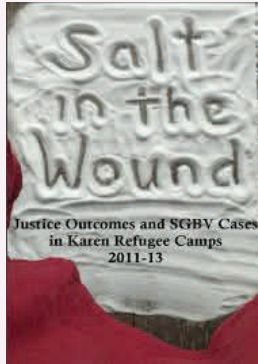
Key Facts:

In 2014, 2015 and 2016, a total of **1,078** women received services from KWO's Safe House Project.

In 2014, 2015 and 2016, KWO conducted awareness raising activities about SGBV in 7 districts of Karen State, in 7 refugee camps and in Ee Tu Hta IDP camp reaching many thousands of women and men.

During the **16 days of Activism campaign**, KWO directly engaged **13,798** participants in 2014, **12,108** in 2015 and **15,116** in 2016.

In Karen State violence against women is state-sponsored and perpetrated by armed Burmese soldiers, and it is also found in our own communities



Excerpt from “Salt in the Wound”

(Published November 2015)

For many years, KWO has raised women’s concerns about the inadequate justice system in the refugee camps, but our concerns have been met only by excuses. We have been told to wait or that our demands are excessive. We have been told there is nothing wrong with the system, and we have been told that justice is not women’s business. We have been reminded that we are not trained lawyers, advised that we should not get involved, and cautioned that we would not be capable of understanding the issue. We have been informed we are interfering, and that these matters supposedly exceed our mandate as a women’s organisation. We have been instructed to leave justice issues for the experts, or for the men. We have been told that, as refugees, we must simply endure the status quo. These are the same messages that women have heard in all cultures throughout history whenever we speak out against, protest, or demand an end to the violence perpetrated against us.

SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

perpetrated by members of our own community, often husbands against their wives. In the refugee camps, women are fortunately safe from the violence of soldiers, but still are victims of violence perpetrated by men in our own community, and by Thai nationals. Domestic violence is common in both the refugee camps and in Karen State. Response from governance structures in the refugee camps and more so in Karen State, is extremely inadequate.

• Safe Houses and Women’s Protection Project

In the three years covered by this report, KWO continued to provide a safe shelter to women in the 7 refugee camps through our 11 safe houses and were able to expand. Altogether 566 women and girl victims of violence lived in the Safe Houses during this time period. Women accessing the services of KWO can choose to seek shelter in a safe house or can request services in their own home.

The Safe House project and our broad work to prevent and respond to SGBV includes the provision of safe shelter, physical and emotional support, advocacy, case management, referral to other services, awareness raising and trying to change attitudes about the use of violence in our community, as well as continual capacity building for our staff. To ensure quality of care, KWO has published Karen language guidelines and manuals which are distributed to all staff and used during all trainings. These include:

- * Safe House Guidelines - a 51 page manual of standards and procedures for the Safe Houses
- * KWO SGBV Case Management Pamphlet for Community Education
- * Women’s Protection Manual
- * Counseling Training Guidelines
- * Automatic-Response Mechanism/Standard Operating Procedures – ARM/SOP for SGBV cases

1,633 women received awareness training on women’s protection issues
1,238 participants in community coordination meetings for SGBV case management

During this period, KWO expanded our women’s protection work in Karen State. This work included increasing direct support to victims of sexual and gender based violence and assisting women to access justice and social welfare support as necessary. Our work also included providing workshops in counseling skills, women’s protection and case management.

KWO knows from our research in the camps how justice systems fail women victims of SGBV. Our work in Karen State helping women to access justice and services is very challenging in terms of getting justice and ensuring security for the victims. In some cases security is also needed for our staff and leaders who are providing services both in camps and in Karen State



Tackling SGBV through education, men attending a workshop on the Geneva Call Commitments

To ensure structural and institutional development that supports and protects women, KWO (particularly the Executive Committee), has been assisting in the review of Kawthoolei laws. The KNU has invited KWO to head up an advisory group that is responsible for drafting new laws on domestic violence.

- *“Salt in The Wound: Justice outcomes and SGBV cases in Karen Refugee Camps 2011-13”*

In November 2015, KWO published the results of our research on justice outcomes for 289 women victims of violence in 2011 and 2013, in the 7 predominantly Karen refugee camps in Thailand.

The research concluded that the justice system provided an inadequate outcome for victims of violence in 80% of cases in 6 of the 7 camps, clearly showing that justice in the camps is failing the community it is supposed to serve.

KWO conducted an extensive dissemination and launch of the report, in the refugee camps as well as to NGOs, UN agencies and donors. KWO hopes to use the results as a baseline from which to advocate for specific improvements to the camp justice system and ultimately for improved justice in Karen State and in Burma.

- *Campaign: 16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women*

KWO works with the communities in Karen State and in the camps to improve the community response to incidents of violence against women and to empower communities to insist on services and justice for victims of violence.

*Excerpt from KWO Statement for 16 days of Activism, 2016.
KWO Message: On-going Sexual Violence by Burma Army.*

In Burmese military operations in Arakan State over the past months, there have been consistent reports received of widespread, systematic sexual violence against Rohingya women by Burma Army troops. In a little over one month, 192 reports have been received of incidents of rape committed by Burma military. We are deeply pained by these reports, which revive memories of similar horrors endured for decades by women in our communities at the hands of the Burma Army. Other reports continue to emerge of the widespread use of torture, unlawful killings, and disappearances suffered by the Rohingya people at the hands of the Burma Army soldiers. Cases of 428 deaths, and 192 disappearances of Rohingya people have been documented.”

*Read the full statement at:
www.karenwomen.org*

Burmese Government obligations from
“Declaration of the Commitment to End
Sexual Violence in Conflict”

We are determined to:

1. Ensure that sexual violence prevention and response efforts are prioritized and adequately funded from the first phase and throughout all responses to conflict and humanitarian emergencies.
2. Provide better, more timely and comprehensive assistance and care, including health and psychosocial care that addresses the long-term consequences of sexual violence in conflict, to female, male and child victims and their families, including children born as the result of sexual violence.
3. Ensure that all peace, security and conflict mediation processes explicitly recognize the need to prevent, respond to and reduce crimes of sexual violence in conflict and stressed the need to exclude such crimes from amnesty provisions.
4. Promote women's full participation in all political, governance and security structures, as well as all decision-making processes, including peace negotiations, peace building, prevention and accountability efforts, recognizing the important contribution that National Action Plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 can play in this regard, and ensure that such processes also take into full consideration the needs and rights of women and children.
5. Strengthen UN efforts to address sexual violence in conflict and provide further support to the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict as chair of UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.
6. Strengthen and support the efforts of regional organizations to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict in their peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building initiatives.
7. Support conflict-affected states in strengthening their capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict and to develop and implement national security sector and justice reform programs that take into full consideration the needs and rights of women and children.
8. Support the deployment of national and international expertise at the request of host governments, the UN and other international organisations to build national capacity to hold perpetrators to account and to improve the response and support to victims and their access to justice.
9. Ensure our national military and police doctrine and training is in accordance with international law so as to enable a more effective prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict.
10. Encourage and improve the safe and ethical collection of data and evidence relating to acts of sexual violence committed in conflict, to inform national and international responses.
11. Encourage, support and protect the efforts of civil society organizations, including women's groups and human rights defenders, to improve the monitoring and documentation of cases of sexual violence in conflict without fear of reprisal and empower victims to access justice.
12. Support and encourage the development of the International Protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict at national, regional and international levels, with a view to its conclusion in 2014.

SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

Since 2003, KWO has organized events for the global campaign: the 16 days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women Campaign in the refugee camps and more recently in Karen State. The events are a good opportunity to sustain interest and support for KWO's ongoing work. Throughout the camps and Karen state KWO conducts discussion groups, film-screenings and distributes IEC materials. KWO produces a range of materials to help spread the message during the campaign, including t-shirts, badges, stickers and pamphlets.

2014's campaign slogan was: ***“From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Gender-Based Violence!”*** 8,856.00 women and 4,942.00 men were engaged in KWO's campaign activities. This totals 13,798 total people taking part in Karen State, and Karen refugee camps in Thailand.

In 2015 activities centered round the slogan: ***“70% of SGBV cases in our community are domestic violence. Help the men you know to stop using violence”*** KWO was able to use the research results from Salt in the Wound report to highlight the serious problem of domestic violence in the community. Following the report KWO has focused more resources on improving the understanding of, and responses to, domestic violence at all levels in the community. In the 2015 campaign across all sites, 7,466 women and 4,642 men (a total of: 12,108 persons) were directly involved in the activities of the campaign.

In 2016, our campaign centered around the KWO message: ***“Strengthen law and promote justice for the protection of women and children”***, and 15,115 persons engaged in campaign activities. Read an excerpt from a KWO statement released on this day: “On-going Sexual Violence by Burma Army” on the previous page which illustrates why the KWO message for 2016 is so vital. In this statement KWO highlights the many recent reports of rapes committed against Rohingya women. It expresses surprise that the NLD, headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have denied that these have occurred (as have the Burmese Army). In June 2014, Burma signed (to much fanfare) the United Nations –Declaration of the Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, yet the Burma Army continues to perpetrate sexual violence with impunity. KWO calls on the NLD to publicly announce that SGBV in the Burmese army is prohibited, and that any reports of it will be investigated and the perpetrator(s) punished. A culture of widespread violations of women's rights, supported by impunity, have allowed this violence to continue. Thus law needs to be strengthened, and justice outcomes for women guaranteed.

- **Strengthening women survivors of violence Project**

This project started in July 2016, and is carried out in partnership with Asian Justice and Rights (AJAR). This project aims to build the capacity of women survivors and strengthen survivor networks so that these women are enabled to represent themselves in advocacy.

To this end we created a safe space in 2016 for 12 women survivors to meet together to share their experiences and challenges. We also initiated opportunities for 23 survivors to attend workshops and seminars throughout Burma, to allow these women to make connections with CBOs and various networks. With 12 survivors we collected data on experiences and abuses, in order to strengthen advocacy



Opening Ceremony in camp for 16 days of activism 2016

around VAWG (violence against women and girls). Additionally, we made a short documentary on a range of human rights violations committed against women, to create awareness of the complex issues surrounding domestic violence, as well as recording human rights violations committed by the military regime. This video facilitates discussion on how communities can support survivors, challenge violence and be sensitive to difficulties women may have in speaking about these experiences. Our project staff received relevant training to ensure they facilitated meetings of women, and data collection in a considerate and caring way.

KWO also spoke to district, community and church leaders to assist them in understanding survivor concerns and leadership responsibility.

- Next Steps:
- * Follow up action on the recommendations generated by the Salt in the Wound Report.
- * Expand safe house project into Karen State locations. Develop community referral systems and procedures for SGBV case management in Karen State
- * Advocate for revision of Kawthoolei laws on violence against women and child protection
- * Continue to advocate for strengthening of law, and campaign for ending of impunity for SGBV perpetrators.

Income Generation Project:

KWO's income generation project started in 2003. The aim of the project is to develop with women a way for them to earn their own money.

Advanced weaving and sewing training has taken place, and KWO provides materials to make garments using these skills.

This project is operating in Mae La Oo, Ma Ra Ma Luang, Umphiem and Noh Poe.

Due to funding restrictions, KWO has not been able to run training in recent years to include more women in these activities.

The women involved in IGP design and make Karen Traditional Clothing, so this project also works to uphold and promote tradition.

This clothing is sold in Mae Sot, and via postal order. Funds raised go to the women in the project, and on project costs (materials etc.).

For further information, please email: kwocentral@gmail.com



EDUCATION PROGRAM

Projects under this program:

1. Early Childhood Development Project
2. Special Education Project
3. Dormitories for Student Access to Education Project
4. Unaccompanied Children Project
5. Karen Young Women's Leadership School

Child Protection

A key area of KWO's work has been advocating for improved protection of children as one of the most vulnerable groups in our community. For many years KWO has provided Child Rights trainings in an effort to improve Child Protection in the refugee camps and in Karen State. KWO has participated in developing Child Protection Referral systems as well as providing direct support in cases of serious child abuse.

At the same time as strengthening Child Rights in our community, KWO has established projects which work to prevent abuses of three main groups of vulnerable children in the camps and in Karen State. These are:

- * under 5 year olds, through our Nursery School program in the refugee camps and in Karen State
- * children, and young people with disabilities and their families – KWO is the only community group educating and achieving basic rights through our Special Education Project.
- * Unaccompanied minors: through a "Separated Students Dormitory Project" in Karen State and in the refugee camps, KWO provides safe residential care for students who have to leave their homes in order to access education

● Early Childhood Development Project

KWO's camp Nursery School Project and Special Education project was endangered in 2015 when a long term donor stopped funding due to a reorganization of its regional priorities. There was not much notice given and this placed both projects in jeopardy. However, KWO immediately launched a funding appeal and with the assistance of our networks, we were able to secure the funding for the next school year to operate on a minimum budget. One part of this appeal was the launch of KWO's: "Sponsor a Teacher" campaign. This campaign was in English and Karen, and aimed for financial support from the Karen diaspora and overseas friends. This campaign was successful in providing teacher stipends, with more than 150 individuals signing up to sponsor an SE Teacher or a Nursery School Teacher. Such initiatives have allowed us to continue both these projects. We will maintain the teacher's sponsorship program in order to diversify and increase funding sources for the nursery school and special education projects.

Children in the age group "under-5" are one of the most vulnerable groups in any community. They are more at risk of serious health problems than any other group in the community. They have particular needs for their physical, emotional and social well being that parents living in poverty in isolated refugee camps or in



Activity with word cards, KWO Nursery School, 2015

Karen State often are unable to provide. The Nursery School Project seeks to respond to some of those needs in collaboration with parents. In the camps, reduction to rations, means that the hygiene and nutritional support provided by the Nursery School Project is even more urgent.

Lessons and activities in KWO nursery schools are taught in the mother tongue of the children. The movement for education reform in Burma has education instruction in indigenous languages as a key focus for change.

The Nursery School Project includes

Teacher training for all NS teachers

The development of locally made teaching materials and toys

The provision of a daily nutritious meal and snack

Parents and local community participation in school management

Inclusive approach to education for children with special needs

Child rights approach

Hygiene training for children

- Camp Nursery Schools:

KWO's Nursery School project plays an essential role in educating and achieving basic rights for young children and their families in 2 refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border (Mae La Oon and Mae Ra Ma Luang camps). The 18 Nursery Schools in this project provide daily care and

How KWO uses the Montessori Method:

"The teachers organize time for their group of children to learn with Montessori methods and materials for at least one hour every day. The children respond very well in the Montessori class. The method is fun, and exciting for the children. They show a keen interest. The materials are real things, or pictures of real things, that they use in their daily lives. The lessons are very practical with lots of touching and doing tasks with objects. We include several of the Montessori themes: practical life, sensory, culture, math, language.

[Activities vary in content and purpose but are all practical and focus on real life. We observe that many children then teach their own family members what they have learnt. We observe increased independence and self-confidence in the children."

from KWO SE Project
Report 2016



EDUCATION PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

education to approximately 1,800 young children each year, help them transition more successfully into Primary School, and support mothers who wish to be active in the community. Since 2012, we have been increasing the use of Montessori methods and materials each year. KWO is the sole manager and implementer and no other early childhood services are available in these sites.

- Karen State Nursery Schools:

By the end of 2016, KWO was supporting 97 nursery schools, with 274 staff in Karen State, who provided early childhood education to around 3,900 children every year in 6 districts. KWO began managing nursery schools in Karen State in 2007 and the demand for them has kept on increasing, with a growing understanding in the Karen community of the importance of Early Childhood Education.

*“Before my child attended the SE Centre I had to do everything for him.
Now he is more independent, and is healthier and happier”*

As the issue of refugees returning from the camps in Thailand to locations in Burma becomes more of a reality, the nursery schools may also become a key piece in providing returning young children with a safe base in a time of extreme insecurity.

- Special Education Project

In this period, there was a significant and very welcome increase in the number of nursery schools, primary schools and high schools accepting children and youth with disabilities into classrooms. KWO believes that this is the impact of our work with special needs kids and is the result of KWO supporting mainstream classroom teachers and years of working to change attitudes in our community. In 2015, KWO started our first SE project in Karen State, Burma with a pilot project in Ee Tu Hta IDP camp.

KWO's Special Education project plays an essential role in educating and increasing independence and achieving basic rights for children and young people with disabilities and their families in 7 refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border, and now in Ee Tu Hta IDP Camp in Karen State.

The KWO project provides services to children with disabilities and their families in the 7 camps and is the only such project providing these services. It has been running very successfully since 2007 in all camps and since 2003 in two camps (Mae Ra Moe and Mae La Oon).

KWO trains specialized teachers and provides stipends for those teachers who support children with disability in home visits and in classrooms. KWO provides learning materials for the 11 SE Centers.

- Support mainstream school teachers in nursery and primary schools who



Children in SE Small Group Learning Session , 2015

have children with a disability in their classes

- educate and support parents
- provide additional food and hygiene items for the children
- is the key agency for the development of Karen deaf sign language
- constantly advocates for positive change in our community.

The project staff have dedicated themselves to creating trusting relationships with the children in order to make a positive impact on their lives and wellbeing. They provide home visits, small group learning, classroom support in mainstream schools and various community-based trainings.

At the end of December 2016, there were 364 children with disabilities enrolled in the project. This number will increase in 2017 as we plan to extend the project in to 3 districts in Karen State, these are: Mu Traw, Doo Playa and Doo Tha Htu. Our first focus in expansion in these areas will be awareness raising.

- **Dormitories for Student Access to Education Project:**

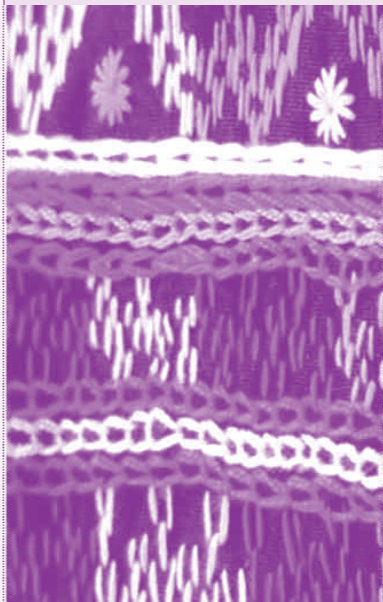
By 2016 KWO supports dormitories for unaccompanied children in 20 sites. There are 3 dormitories in 3 refugee camps on the Thailand/Burma border (Mae Ra Moe, Mae La and Noh Poe), and 17 dormitories inside Karen State. In the last four years KWO has reduced our dormitories in camps, this is due to less students being present there, and reduction of



Karen Sign Language Videos and Books, Volumes 1–9

KWO has created 9 videos, and accompanying books to demonstrate Karen Sign Language movements. These videos and books are an invaluable resource in training our SE Teachers, the wider community and other interested parties.

They also serve as a record of new symbols, and capture this language, enabling its continued use.



Dormitory Students walking to School, Umphiem Mai, 2014

resources for the camps in preparation for repatriation. TBC and Camp Committees are discouraging those running the dormitories to accept new students. In Karen State however KWO has increased the quantity of dormitories it runs from 2 in 2015, to 17 from 2016 onwards. This is because in 2016 the Mae Tao Clinic asked KWO to take over the 15 dormitories that they had been running in Karen State under their child protection program. In 2016 KWO supported approximately 1,250 dormitory students across 20 dormitories, in Karen State and in the refugee camps.

In Karen State there are many primary schools, but less middle schools and a lot less high schools. Therefore, a child who wishes to further their education beyond primary level often has no choice but to leave home to be able to access the nearest school. Some of these children can stay with relatives, but for many the only way is to stay in a dormitory. By providing a dormitory, students can continue their studies safely and are encouraged in the continuation of their education. There is a history of students traveling to the refugee camps both to access education and to be safe from conflict in Karen State. These same reasons apply in addition to dormitories within Karen State, with also geographical proximity to schools a prominent factor for many children from remote villages.

In order to ensure quality of care, KWO has developed a manual of standards for the dormitories, entitled: "Not less than this: dormitory standards of care." We also provide training for the dormitory Cares, as well as training on Child Rights.

- Advocacy for ethnic language instruction in Burma

KWO is part of the movement for Education Reform in Burma and in 2014 and 2015 participated in education stakeholders meetings and joined advocacy trips in Yangon. Key demands of KWO is for education in the mother tongue and for multi-lingual education.

EDUCATION PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

Women's Leadership Training

Karen Women's Organisation advocates for women's participation in decision making throughout society, from the family to the nation. As the situation on the Thailand-Burma border and inside Burma rapidly changes, KWO is uniquely positioned and qualified to play an influential role of increasing women's involvement in refugee return, peace in Burma and creating a new democratic civil society. This effort is both urgent and important. Without the participation of women, a truly democratic civil society and genuine peace cannot be achieved.

KWO's work focuses on advocating for women's voices as well as training and learning opportunities for women leaders to develop their skills. Since its beginning, KWO has worked to increase the number of women leaders, as well as to provide continual support and training for current women leaders

- Karen Young Women's Leadership School Project

The KYWLS opened in 2001 and is still going strong. Since that time KYWLS has trained an average of 25 young women from Karen State every year. The total number of graduates from KYWLS from 2001 to 2016 is 355.

The main objective of the school is to increase young women's participation and work in the Karen community and with KWO. Every year, most graduates take up positions in KWO, in other CBOs and in their communities.

- Capacity Building Project

KWO has been running a capacity building project to develop the skills and knowledge of its position holders since 2001, this project sits in our Organising and Information Sharing Program. This project is particularly important for helping KWO to manage the impact of resettlement of key position holders from the refugee camps to third countries through the Refugee Resettlement program. Resettlement of refugees was difficult for the whole refugee community, since often the best educated left the camps first leaving a huge skills gap at clinics, schools, camp committees and in community organisations.

To manage this, KWO further systematized its capacity building work and developed standardized modules on key areas essential to working with KWO. Through this project's work we have created a huge amount of training material which is in our language and suits our situation, and successfully empowers women. In the capacity building project, we have distinct and multiple modules on topics such as: KWO Constitution and job descriptions; KWO values (including CEDAW, UNSCR 1325); Project management and monitoring; the Geneva Call Commitments; and Women's Protection.

500 to 1,000 women KWO position holders and community managers each year have received Capacity Building training.

Most years, we have a Training of Trainers (ToT) to ensure that a group of trainers is available in each site to maintain and sustain the large number of women working in KWO elected positions or as project staff.

Capacity Building and Access to Resources:

KWO recognizes that community level knowledge is varied and invaluable. Members of the community in camps are skilled in a diverse range of ways, and have a long history of developing creative solutions to challenges in order to survive.

Individuals within our community are the best placed to implement, lead and develop our projects for the support of the Karen people.

Capacity building of both paid Project Staff and Community members serves to enhance, or expand, knowledge bases.

This training allows KWO to ensure that persons from our Community are able to take up positions with us, despite having not previously been formally recognized or working directly in the role to which they are recruited. For this reason, financial and project management training are important. They also serve to inspire confidence to lead, and enhance self-belief.

Additionally, for the community at large these sessions facilitate discussion and awareness raising on topics such as domestic violence, further supporting those who are working individually and within groups in Camps and Karen State to eradicate this violence.

Capacity Building training (present in nearly all our projects) is valuable and must be always supported by increased access to resource.



Putting together Baby Kits for distribution, 2014

HEALTH PROGRAM

Projects under this Program

1. Baby Kits and Women's Health
2. Women's Health Project: TBA training and support

- Baby Kits and Women's Health Project

During this period KWO reviewed and updated the health information leaflet containing health messages to recipients of the Baby Kits and was able to increase the health education sessions that it provides to communities.

In 2014, 2015 and 2016 12,034 baby kits were distributed to mothers of newborn babies in 7 districts of Karen State.

In these 3 years, at least 20, 034 individuals participated in Health Education Sessions and improved their understanding of maternal and child health, and of nutrition.

KWO has successfully implemented the Baby Kit Project in refugee camps since 2002 and then inside Karen State since September 2003. In 2009, due to funding shortfalls, KWO suspended the project in the refugee camps and allocated all funds we had secured to the Karen State project. For several years the project was implemented by KWO in the 7 districts in Karen State and one IDP camp, Ee Tu Hta.

Maternal and child health in ethnic areas continues to be of a very low standard. Through decades of neglect, the government health system now ranks among the worst in the world. But surveys by community health organizations, (published in reports: The Long Road to Recovery and Diagnosis Critical) reveal

HEALTH PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

that health in the ethnic areas is even worse than government figures reveal. It will take decades for proper, functioning health systems and infrastructure to be developed and in the meantime community led- health initiatives are essential for minimizing the impact of the poor and under-resourced health programming of the government.

Because Maternal and Child health data for Eastern Burma is among the worst in the world, the Baby Kits initiative was started to address the problem of hygiene for newborns and new mothers, since many people could not afford the items provided in the kits, and therefore were at risk of infection and other diseases.

The program provides kits containing:

- Soap for bathing
- Laundry Soap
- Cloth nappies
- Nail clippers
- Health Message

- Women's Health Project: Support for Traditional Birth Attendants

Over 2014, 2015 and 2016 we supported 90-100 practicing TBAs in 2 camps to continue their practice in a safe and holistic way.

KWO established this project on a small scale in these 2 northern Karen refugee camps in 2005. We have been providing training and material support for about 100 practicing Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) since then. These camps are: Mae Ra Moe, and Mae La Oo.

The TBA project includes the provision of essential hygiene supplies to practicing birth attendants, we well as regular skills refresher courses for the attendants. Emphasis is placed on recognizing danger signs and the referral system to hospitals if these signs show. The project also includes health education sessions to pregnant women and post natal woman every 4 months, with an average of 300 women attending each session.



KWO Staff delivering materials in Karen State, 2014

Traditional Birth Attendants Information:

TBAs in camps, and in Karen State, assist women to give birth at home.

These TBAs are members of the community, therefore often known and trusted by families.

The range of experience and training varies across TBAs, based on age, opportunity and background.

In 2014, 2015 and 2016 in the 2 camps where KWO supports TBAs, they delivered 1,146 babies.

Training, and provision of resource, to TBAs is important in ensuring the best possible health outcomes for women.

KWO has created the first TBA training manual in Karen (published January 2014).

In collaboration with Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) and Karen Department of Health and Wellbeing (KDHWS), KWO is working to provide certification for TBAs, so that the training and skills of TBAs in camps are formally recognized.

This is to make sure that when and if these TBAs return to Karen State they will have greater chance of employment, opportunity and ability to practice.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- [Karen Women's Organisation \(KWO\) Website](#)
- [Women's League of Burma \(WLB\)](#)
- [The Border Consortium \(TBC\)](#)
- [Mae Tao Clinic](#)
- [Progressive Voice Myanmar previously known as Burma Partnership](#)
- [Karen Information Centre MAPS:](#)

MAPS



Refugee Camps on the Thai/Burma border



Karen Districts Map



Karen Women's Organisation (KWO)

www.karenwomen.org