



SWAN: A ten-year journey

March 2009

Shan Women's Action Network

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Message from SWAN

This short publication contains reflections on SWAN's experiences over the past ten years. Our aim was to take stock of our 10-year journey -- both achievements and challenges -- as well as to provide an insight into the complexities of developing a feminist movement within our cultural and political context.

Much is painful to remember: the mass forced relocations by Burma's military regime in 1996-1998 that uprooted hundreds of thousands of villagers in central Shan State, forcing them to flee to Thailand; the massacres and systematic rape used to subjugate and terrorize our communities; the exploitation of Shan refugee labour in Thailand. Amidst this horror and turmoil, SWAN was born.

After ten years, the situation in Shan State and the rest of Burma remains grim, but we feel a sense of achievement in having created a space for women's activism, and catalyzing a movement for gender equality in and beyond our communities.

We have sought to uphold our feminist principles and commitment to equality, human rights and social justice throughout our work. Despite the many challenges, our experiences have reinforced our belief in these principles.

We wish to thank our friends and supporters who have stood with us over the past ten years. Your support has increased our determination to challenge injustice and work for genuine political change and peace in Burma.

PHASE I: 1999 - 2001



1999 **2000** **2001 >**

Shan
Women's
Action
Network

The beginning: A group with “No head, no tail”

On 28 March, 1999, a group of Shan women of different ages and backgrounds came together for a meeting. Our aim was to form a Shan women’s organization.

Most of us had already been involved in various networks carrying out activities to address the needs of displaced Shan communities, particularly women and children. Since the Burmese military regime’s mass forced relocations in central and southern Shan State beginning in 1996, over a hundred thousand refugees had fled to Thailand. Denied access to refugee camps, they had faced tremendous hardship to survive, ending up as low-paid migrant workers, mainly in farms or construction sites in northern Thailand.

Realising that we all had a common goal of social and political change in Burma, to enable our people to live in peace and exercise their rights of self-determination, we formalized our network and founded SWAN.

Some women had been giving health education, particularly on HIV/AIDS, and emergency assistance to Shan migrants and refugees; some had been working for organizations such as the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), documenting and publicizing human rights abuses in Shan State, the Migrant Assistance Programme (MAP) and the Burma Relief Centre (BRC), and others had been organizing Shan literacy classes and Shan cultural activities along the

Thai-Shan border, and publishing Shan literacy text books and posters. Some had been involved in the Women’s Association of Shan State, which had been set up six years earlier in a liberated Shan area, but which had been unable to operate independently and therefore became defunct when the Shan Mong Tai Army surrendered in early 1996.

We felt that by establishing a formal organization we could more effectively address not only the practical needs of displaced Shan women and children but also their strategic needs. We would be able to network with other women’s organization from Burma, as well as GOs and NGOs working with women locally, nationally and internationally.

Through the discussions, we reached a consensus on the name of the organization, its objectives and our symbol, a stylized image of the *kenneri*, dancing in a martial arts posture.

Our principles

Commitment to

- feminist principles
- equality
- fundamental human rights
- social justice



Our Symbol

SWAN's logo is a stylized image of the *Kennari*, a mythical half-bird half-woman, who is depicted dancing in a martial arts posture. The logo represents our desire to preserve our culture and to protect ourselves as human beings. The dance of the Kennari or "bird dance," performed by dancers dressed up in elaborate bird costumes, is uniquely Shan, and always comes first in any Shan cultural performance or major celebration.

The bird dance has its origin in an ancient Buddhist tale. When the Buddha returned from the Heavens to Earth on the Full Moon of the 11th month, spirits, mythical creatures, humans and other living beings came to pay their respects. Among them were the Kennari and her male counterpart, the Kennara, who danced for the Buddha. Theirs was the most impressive of all the performances that greeted the Buddha, and the humans who witnessed the dance decided to learn it and make it part of their own culture. Thus, humans dressed as birds replaced the "real" Kennari and Kennara.

According to our Shan legends, the Kennari lives in the deep jungles of the Himalayan foothills. This golden creature is not only beautiful but also warm-hearted and faithful to other beings. She is peaceful and eats only pollen from flowers.

We could think of no better symbol for our organization.

At the meeting, we discussed working in different sectors such as education, health, fund raising and networking. We all agreed that we would work independently with no influence from any outside individuals, organizations and political groups, and that we should work as a team of equals. We decided that we should be community-oriented: prioritizing the best interests and safety of women and the community, remaining accountable to them at all levels.

In accordance with our principles of working as a team, we agreed upon a flat structure for the organization. This was unprecedented. In fact, as soon as our organization was founded, we were asked who the "chair" and other leading positions were. When people learnt that SWAN did not have any such hierarchy, some commented: **'What kind of organization is this, with no head and no tail – how can it go in the right direction?'**

In the Shan community itself, there were questions as to why we had formed a separate organization made up of women only. According to the deep-rooted cultural and traditional values of our community, both men and women had always worked together for community development and for social and religious functions. Some were concerned that SWAN's formation would lead to confrontation with men, as they had heard that when other women's groups were formed, their members had started challenging men who drank and smoked. Some were upset that we appeared to want to work for "women only" while all people from Shan State were suffering.

A few days after SWAN was founded, we organized community awareness activities at the Poi Sang Long festival (the Shan novice ordination festival) in Chiang Mai to publicize the formation of SWAN and to introduce SWAN members to the community; at the same time we raised awareness on issues such as health, human rights and the environment, etc.

Reflections on founding day of SWAN: 28 March 1999

By Hseng Moon, SWAN Coordinator

My friend *Ying* told me about the meeting. She said, “We are trying to form a Shan women’s organization.” She also took me to attend the meeting.

I saw many women - about 40 to 50. I felt, “Wow... a lot of women. I have never seen a women’s meeting like this before.” I was very proud of them because they were very active and could talk a lot.

I just introduced myself, but didn’t speak at all. I tried to understand what women were discussing. Even though they discussed in Shan, I had to try very hard to work out what they were saying because there was a lot of new Shan vocabulary and political words that I had never heard before.

For me, I had known only the meetings in our village or town - just talking about the orders from the [Burmese] military to do labor, and who had to do what for the military. Women just sat outside the meeting and listened. In our village, women could only discuss things related to religious ceremonies or events, cooking, cleaning etc. So a meeting like this was very strange for me.

I had no idea what to discuss, also I had no confidence either. But I liked the meeting very much. Everyone was given a chance and invited to share ideas. It meant they respected younger people. At the meeting, there were women of different ages from different backgrounds doing different jobs. After the meeting, they divided responsibilities among themselves about who would do what. So I was thinking that I would just wait and see what I could do to help in this group.

Also, I was proud to be able to attend a meeting like this – a women’s only meeting, where women were working for women. I decided then that I would try to help the organization in whatever way I could. I told myself that I would try my best to be a good follower, not a leader because I was too hesitant to speak in front of other people. At the same time, I knew that I had to change myself first, especially that I had to practice talking more and avoid staying alone if I really wanted to help and work in the organization. I also realized that I needed to learn about many issues and learn a lot of skills, and in particular I had to build my self-confidence.

Women's Association of Shan State



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Women's Association of Shan State (WASS)

WASS was set up on December 5, 1993, by women living in an area of Shan State liberated by the Shan resistance close to the Thai border. Its aims were to preserve Shan culture; to struggle for Shan independence and to join hands with women in other countries of the world to strive for women's rights. Its activities included holding regular meetings for women in the community, publishing a newsletter, running a maternal and childcare centre, collecting funds and organizing weaving projects.

However, when the Shan Mong Tai Army surrendered at the start of 1996, the organization ceased to exist.

By Charm Tong, SWAN Advocacy Team member

I was very excited when I learned about the meeting to form a Shan women's group. I had no idea how it would turn out.

In the morning of 28 March 1999, a community leader dropped me off together with other women from the border. At the meeting, I saw many women and girls from the border area where I grew up. I also saw all my "Mae Sayas" (mother-teachers), who had been teaching the displaced children and youth along the border. There were also two women who had just come from inside Shan State and Rangoon.

I do not remember myself speaking a lot, but I do remember that it took some time to agree on the right words for the organization's name and its work in Shan because of choice of words: e.g. should we use "empowerment" of women or "helping" the women? The discussion was so rich and made me think more deeply. I felt the strength of us Shan women working together.

I also learned there used to be another Shan women's organization: The Women's Association of Shan State (WASS), and I saw its leaflet for the first time.

The women who came to the meeting came from various backgrounds; they were of different ages, and had different jobs and life experiences. They talked about how women suffered under the Burmese military regime, and discrimination and violence against women in the community, including domestic violence.

I felt that women's activism was growing. Whether we had come from the border areas, or from inside Shan State, young or old, we had all come together with the same vision, to stop discrimination and violence against women.

Just a day after the meeting, on March 29, 1999, I was at the airport about to leave for the 55th Session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland, when one of the SWAN members brought me 50 copies of the new SWAN brochure. They were so new that they were still hot from the photocopier. I was very proud to take them along with me. Merci, who worked with IID (Initiatives for International Dialogue in the Philippines), even joked with me: "Now you can tell people that you come from an organization that was just set up yesterday!"

Learning, working and developing the organization

SWAN was set up with no outside funding. At that time, most of us were working in different organizations and on particular projects or as migrant workers, so we met regularly on weekends at a convenient place or communicated by phone. After several meetings, we started renting a small place that we called the “SWAN Centre,” an exciting step at that time. All of us pooled our resources (human and material) to run the SWAN Centre and to be able to start operating SWAN projects along the borders.

There was only one staff member at the centre. Her main task was to be a contact person. There were only very limited funds, so SWAN volunteers raised funds by catering for workshops and functions of other community-based organizations. With income from these efforts, we were able to print our very first SWAN English newsletter, and buy a motorbike to transport SWAN staff.

With our limited capacity at the outset and lack of legal status in Thailand, it was a challenge to address the practical needs of refugees along the Thai–Shan border. The most immediate needs of the refugees were health and education, so SWAN began running health care programs and schools for displaced communities. To build the capacity of our younger members, SWAN sent interns to other organizations in Thailand as well as abroad, and also started our own SWAN internship program for young Shan women.

Initially, there was no fixed schedule or curriculum for our interns. They were sent to attend meetings and trainings organized by other local organizations, to learn about issues and also about working with other

people outside SWAN, and outside the Shan community. These experiences enabled SWAN interns to build confidence and learn to do things on their own, as well as to build strong networks outside SWAN.

SWAN interns were encouraged to think creatively, show initiative, and work cooperatively, not only within the SWAN team, but also in the community and among our broader networks.



School for Shan refugee children, Shan-Thai border

Building alliances for action

From the outset we at SWAN were firmly committed to the concept of networking – building alliances to promote solidarity and action to further the rights of women, children and our communities.

Some of our members had already established links with Thai-based NGOs and within months of our formation, SWAN joined with these groups to take action in demanding justice for a group of Shan migrant women who had been sexually abused by a Thai military officer in northern Chiang Mai. (*see Box: Networking with Thai NGOs*).

(Extract from SWAN's first newsletter, September 1999)

Networking with Thai NGOs to demand justice over rape of Shan migrants

The Case:

On July 29, 1999, a Thai sub-lieutenant who had raped two Shan women and sexually molested nine others in the northern Thai province of Chiang Mai escaped prosecution by making an out-of-court settlement with three of the women.

The abuses had occurred on July 12, 1999, when the women were being deported back to Burma for illegal entry to Thailand. The Thai officer, head of the local Ranger unit, had detained the eleven women at his camp at the village of Ban Lan, close to the Thai Burma border, forcing them to strip naked and fondling them. He then raped two of the women.

Following the incident, three of the women, including one of the rape survivors, had reported the incident to the local authorities, and asked for charges to be brought against the Thai officer. However, on July 29, when the women were brought to the local police station in the town of Fang to drop the charges and make an out-of-court settlement.

Of the three plaintiffs, the woman who had been raped received only 11,000 baht (about US \$ 300) and the other two women, who had been forced to strip naked, received 5,000 baht each. A SWAN member who had accompanied the rape survivor to the police station was threatened by a representative of the Thai military officer that if she went ahead and pressed the case her life would be in danger.

The Action:

Following this incident, SWAN was seriously concerned that the officer would go unpunished, and that this would lead to further such abuses happening again. SWAN therefore sought advice from various Thai NGOs working in support of women's rights, including the Thai Foundation for Women, about how to proceed with the case.

As a result, it was agreed among 10 Thai NGOs to submit a joint appeal to the Thai Defence Minister Chuan Leekpai (who is also the Prime Minister) in which the following three requests were made:

1. That just and transparent disciplinary action should be taken as soon as possible against the officer who sexually abused the Shan women, and that NGOs and the media should be kept informed about what has happened in the case.
2. That government agencies should ensure that the officials under their authority do not commit human rights abuses against illegal migrants, particularly sexual abuse of women.
3. That in any future cases of sexual or other human rights abuses committed against migrants, the government agencies to which the offenders belong and any officials involved in the legal proceedings should ensure that justice is served fairly.

The letter was submitted in person by NGO representatives to the Thai government on September 9th.

NGOs that signed the letter included: The Friends of Women, the Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women, Empower, the Migrant Assistance Program and Forum Asia.

Note: In January 2000, the Office of the Secretary of Minister, Ministry of Defence responded to the Friends of Women that disciplinary action had been taken against the officer. However the "punishment" was simply that he had been put on probation for one year and sent back to his mother unit.

We also linked with Thai-based NGOs to promote the rights of migrant women arrested in anti-trafficking raids in Chiang Mai. In mid-2000, 29 women working at a karaoke bar were arrested by Thai police at the instigation of the US-based International Justice Mission. SWAN was asked by Empower and the Migrant Assistance Program to visit the women, who were detained for six weeks in the Chiang Mai Boy's Home. We found that many of their basic rights had been violated, and we ended up assisting the women in

various ways, in the absence of such services by the authorities.

Meanwhile we were also networking with other women's groups from Burma. In November 1999, together with eleven of these groups, SWAN wrote an open letter to the Thai Prime Minister¹ to protest the Thai government's mass forced deportation of undocumented migrants from Thailand. Migrant workers were being rounded up, and sent back across

the borders. Women were particularly vulnerable, and there were reports of women who had returned to Burma being raped by SPDC soldiers.² We urged the government to halt the deportations to prevent further abuse and rape of women migrants and to re-evaluate its deportation policy.³

The letter was well-covered in the media, and was even responded to immediately by the SPDC Embassy in Bangkok, who sent a letter to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that the Thai media reports of mass rape by Burmese soldiers were false. The letter appeared in the Nation's mailbag section.⁴

We were aware that it would strengthen our advocacy at many levels to formalize a network of women's organizations from Burma, and in December 1999, together with eleven other women's organizations of different ethnicities and backgrounds from Burma, we were able to jointly set up the first umbrella women's organization, the Women's League of Burma (WLB).

Working within the WLB has been a rich learning experience. It has been exciting to work with women's groups from Burma's other borders, representing diverse migrant and refugee communities in

Bangladesh, India and China. One significant action we took early on as part of WLB was to organize a signature campaign for the World Conference on Racism⁵, aimed at raising awareness of local communities about racism. Several SWAN members were deeply involved in the campaign as well as joining WLB's advocacy trip to WCAR in South Africa. This was WLB's first initiative for international advocacy⁶, through which we were able to expand our networking to more regional and international networks.



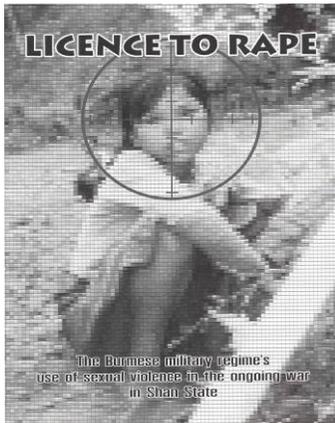
Solidarity action at the World Conference Against Racism

PHASE II: 2002 -2004



Documenting systematic rape in Burma

From 1999, a number of our representatives began attending regional and international conferences and speaking out about state violence against women in Shan State, particularly sexual violence. Meanwhile, our members at the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) produced a booklet in Burmese, compiling all the reported rape cases committed by SPDC soldiers in Shan State in 1998, listing all the rapists.



Alarmed at the high number of rape incidents reported since 1996, together with SHRF in 2001 we began compiling existing documentation of state-sponsored sexual violence, as well as researching new information. This led to the release in June 2002 of the joint SHRF and SWAN report "Licence to Rape," which documented 173 incidents of sexual violence, involving 625 women and girls, committed by the Burma Army in Shan State between 1996 and 2001.⁷

(Extracts from **"Stop Licence to Rape in Shan State, Burma"** joint petition by Thai-based NGOs)

We, from various organizations and individuals, come together to express our collective disgust and anger over the widespread and systematic use of rape as a weapon of war by the Burmese military regime. We ask the international community to take immediate action to end these practices and to protect the victims.

The data that has been documented by the brave women of the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), published as "Licence to Rape", has brought to public attention what, up until now, has been whispered in fear throughout the communities that have been ravaged by these acts of terror. "Licence to Rape" documents the irrefutable and horrific claims of the hundreds of women and girl-children identified as victims of the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) terror tactic that uses rape as a weapon of war in their violent anti-insurgency campaign against citizens of the Shan state.⁸

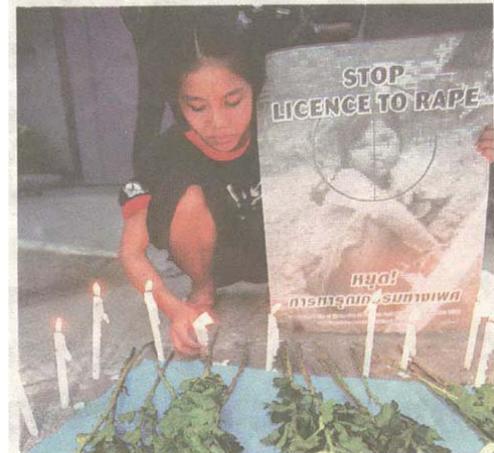
Challenging SPDC:

Following the initial publication of “Licence to Rape,” we began carrying out advocacy related to the report at different levels. Apart from cooperating with local and international media to help publicize the report, SWAN networked closely with local and international rights networks, particularly women’s alliances, to build a campaign to stop sexual violence in Burma, and to lobby UN agencies and governments on the issue.

With tremendous support from friends and networks around the world, in late 2002 we were able to launch the campaign “Stop Licence to Rape in Burma” locally and internationally.

On September 5, 2002, ninety-three Thai women’s groups submitted a petition to the Thai Prime Minister to put pressure on the Burmese military regime to carry out political reform and ensure the safety and security of people working to restore peace and democracy in Burma, especially SWAN and SHRF, the authors of Licence to Rape. On the same day, Thai-based regional human rights organizations launched an on-line petition named “Stop Licence to Rape in Shan State.”¹⁰ The petition, with over 2,000 signatures of individuals and organizations from around the globe, was sent to embassies, UN agencies and Thai parliamentarians and government officials, on the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women on November 25, 2002. ¹⁰On the same day, in Bangkok, Thailand, and in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, local organizations held candlelight vigils for victims of sexual violence in Burma in front of the Burmese regime’s embassies.

6A : THE NATION : Monday, November 25, 2002



Standing vigil

Members of advocacy groups, led by the Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma, light candles in front of the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok yesterday to mark today's International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women. They are calling for an end to sexual violence against Burmese women, following a recent report that said junta soldiers frequently raped women and girls.

The Thai-based regional human rights organization, Forum Asia, arranged for a Thai translation of the report, released in September 2002. The pocket-book size translation became a bestseller in Thailand, and had to be reprinted twice. Thai language media gave extensive coverage of the report during the latter part of 2002. The report was also translated into German by a supporter in November 2002 and posted on a website.¹¹

At regional and international levels, the regional women's organisation, the Asia-Pacific Women's Forum on Law on Development (APWLD)¹² assisted SWAN from the outset with the campaign. APWLD has been consistently providing expertise, network contacts, and funding support to SWAN in the campaign, and sponsored SWAN to attend the meetings with UN Special Rapporteur on several thematic issues,¹³ then international forums of the Asia Social Forum, Commission on the Status of Women and UN Commission on Human Rights.

Women's rights networks in Australia and in the United States were also involved in the campaign. In October, 2002, the Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA) issued a press release condemning the Australian Foreign Minister's visit to Burma, and urging the Australian government to raise the issue of sexual violence with the regime¹⁴. In the USA, Equality Now, an international women's organization based in New York¹⁵, faxed letters to the offices of UN agencies in Burma, criticizing them for their silence on the issue of sexual violence, which the regime was using as evidence that such incidents had not taken place, and urging them to publicly voice concerns on this issue.¹⁶

Targets of SPDC: “terrorists” and “drug-trafficking insurgents”

The contents of the report triggered an international outcry against SPDC, and brought unprecedented international attention to the Shan situation. This publicity was reflected inside Burma. To defuse the international condemnation, the regime was forced to hold several press conferences and published a number of statements of denial.¹⁷ In an attempt to discredit SWAN and SHRF, SPDC launched a smear campaign in its state-run media, calling the authors of the report

“terrorists” and “drug-trafficking insurgents”. They also claimed that men had masterminded the report; SWAN and our members were labeled as “puppets” of male opposition leaders.¹⁸ For SWAN, this was an insult not only to our own integrity and ability, but that of all women of Burma.

In addition to publicly slandering us, SPDC also gave pressure to the Thai authorities to take action against those involved in the publication of “Licence to Rape.” In September 2002, SWAN and SHRF were forced to close our offices.

Coping with the publicity: a steep learning curve

It was hard for SWAN to deal with the sudden glare of publicity from the report. We were still just a small community-based organization with limited resources and capacity. We found ourselves having to pool all our resources and energy to deal with the publicity, while trying to implement the regular activities of our organization.

Our first priority was to form a media team to respond to different media: Thai, Burmese and English. The media team gave direct media interviews, and also accompanied journalists to the field and facilitated interviews with rape survivors and their communities. Also, to respond immediately to SPDC's rebuttals and media attacks, we monitored news, drafted press releases and sent them out to media and networks. We produced Licence to Rape leaflets¹⁹ in Shan, Burmese, Thai and English to distribute to a broad audience, including along the border and inside Burma.

We quickly gained experience in lobbying at different levels, and at public speaking, as we were invited to give presentations at public forums organized in Thailand and other countries.

As we became more organized, we were able to form an actual advocacy team for SWAN. Each team member had to be familiar with the issues we were working on, particularly sexual violence, and have experience with the media and other networks; language skills were essential²⁰. Later, we learnt to develop media strategies, write timely press releases, and follow up with media.

We also learned to draft position papers with the technical assistance of network partners (mostly assisted by APWLD- VAW Programme Officers at that time) to maintain the momentum of the campaign and respond to emerging issues. At the peak of the campaign, we managed to set up a SWAN website to respond to the overwhelming demand from our networks.²¹

We learned the importance of close coordination with our networks - local, regional and international women's networks, human rights, development networks etc – which provided invaluable support to our campaign. Our advocacy work as part of the Women's League of Burma (WLB)²² and technical support from academics in our networks were particularly important. These networks enabled us to raise awareness of state-sponsored sexual violence in Burma, particularly military rape in ethnic areas, with governments, and at regional forums (e.g the ASEAN People's Forum) and UN Forums.

These networks also provided invaluable support during times of crisis. For example, when one of our members faced imminent deportation to Burma, several networks provided emergency support and liaised with the authorities to avoid deportation.²³ Finally, she managed to return to work with us safely.

Political support

A great source of encouragement for us was the support we received from political organizations after the publication of our report. Shortly after the report was released, we received a message from the Prime Minister of the exiled government, expressing appreciation for our report.

The leader of the Shan resistance, Sao Yord Suk, also stated in a Shan Herald Agency for News article on 27 August 2002: *“Before License to Rape, we thought the armed struggle was the only way and these women were wasting their time and energy (...) Now we've learned from them, these brave women, there are several other ways to fight the enemy.”*



SWAN joins Asia Pacific NGO Forum in Bangkok in 2004



SWAN at Peace rally

Letter of Appreciation from Dr. Sein Win, Prime Minister of the exiled government – NCGUB (soon after the release of Licence to Rape)

Reply-To: "NCGUB-USA" <ncgub@ncgub.net>
From: "NCGUB-USA" <burmafund@verizon.net>
To: "SHRF" <shrf@cm.ksc.co.th>
Subject: PM Dr. Sein Win's Appreciation Letter
Date: Thu, 11 Jul 2002 18:39:42 -0400
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 5.50.4807.1700
July 10, 2002

Shan Human Rights Foundation
Chiang Mai
Thailand

I would like to extend, on behalf of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), my warm appreciation to the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) and the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) for coming up with a comprehensive report on the Burmese military regime's use of sexual violence in the ongoing war in Shan State.

Meticulous efforts by your dedicated staff for many years to expose the true nature of the military regime has a profound impact internationally. We are grateful to you all for making our international lobbying work much easier and more effective.

Sincerely,

Sein Win
Prime Minister

We were heartened to learn that at the International Burma Summit in Copenhagen on September 22, 2002, women's issues topped the Burmese democracy movement's agenda for the first time in history as opposition leaders put the demand for international action to end sexual violence by the Burmese army as a priority.

Security-related challenges

With unprecedented international attention from the report, SWAN as an organization faced numerous challenges. The most immediate of these was the security threat. We received warnings from many sources that we needed to protect the safety of the authors and other SWAN members. Many members did not dare stay at the SWAN Centre, and went to stay with friends. Rumours were circulated and anonymous e-mails were sent to SWAN members stating that a price had been put on their heads, and a gunman hired to assassinate them.

When in September 2002 our centre was ordered shut, SWAN members were forced to move into SWAN's safe house. We faced serious financial difficulty at that time. Only in early 2003, were we able to raise emergency funds from Urgent Action Fund for Women and Frontline Human Rights Defenders. We remain extremely grateful for their support and that of the Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development and Forum Asia at this difficult time.

After the sudden closure of the centre, SWAN was forced to operate "underground." This caused tremendous disruption to the operation of the organisation, and psychological stress for the organisation's members. We had to move our centre once a year after September 2002 until 2006 for fear of raids. The staff at the centre had to keep a very low profile, wary of even simple questions from neighbours.

Prioritizing the interests of rape survivors

Apart from security issues, the most common ongoing challenge encountered by SWAN in the aftermath of the report was how to promote an effective inter-national campaign around the report while prioritizing the interests of the rape survivors on the ground.

More and more journalists began asking to interview survivors. At first, SWAN agreed to arrange some direct interviews, on condition of anonymity of the survivors, but the process was extremely traumatic for both the survivors and the SWAN members facilitating the interviews. After several interviews, SWAN had to refuse any further requests from the media.

SWAN also had to refuse requests from some independent researchers wanting to conduct their own investigations into Licence to Rape, in order to avoid inflicting further psychological pain on the rape survivors and the communities, and to protect their safety.²⁴ SWAN also insisted from the outset on being fully informed about and involved in any campaigning activities that developed from the report, believing firmly that the interests of the women on the ground should always be prioritized.

Further challenges arose when the demands of overseas campaigners on the sexual violence issue became directly contrary to our calls, particularly in relation to calls for an independent investigation into rapes inside Shan State.

Given the absence of rule of law, and the total control by the Burmese military of the ethnic areas, we were

very concerned about the safety of the rape survivors, witnesses and other community members. Our fears had been confirmed by the pattern of intimidation carried out by the regime against villagers in Shan State before the proposed visit by UN Special Rapporteur Professor Pinheiro in October 2002.²⁵

Increased capacity to mobilize and advocate

Despite the various challenges, one very encouraging impact of the Licence to Rape campaign has been the fact that more women from our communities have been motivated to seek ways to more effectively address injustices they are facing, whether inside or outside Shan State. Our own increased capacity enabled us to respond to this growing women's activism.

First of all, the publicity from the report has enabled us to raise more funds for our programs on the ground. Several international agencies began offering support for programs to address the impacts of sexual violence in Shan State and in Burma. With this support, SWAN was able to expand our crisis support program, which provides emergency assistance and services to women survivors of violence. We also began travelling to various areas bordering Shan State in northern Thailand giving workshops on gender-based violence and counseling to displaced women, and carrying out awareness raising activities to promote community support for women survivors of violence.

The report also gave us a platform to step up our efforts to advocate for recognition of Shan refugees in Thailand. Together with Thai civil society networks, Thai Senator Kraisaak Choonhavan,²⁶ and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, we were able to lobby successfully to prevent the deportation of 600 Shan refugees from northern Thailand in mid-2002. These refugees had fled across the border from fighting between the Shan State Army and SPDC troops and had sought refuge in a Thai temple.²⁷

Interns' memories of SWAN

Nang Charm Leng (1999)

....This was the first time that I got to know what was really happening in my country. I learnt what rights we have as a human being and the importance of lobbying and doing campaigns to make people understand about our country's situation especially the situation of women living inside Burma. I also gained more self-confidence to be a leader in some situations.

Nang Muay Ngein (1999)

When I arrived at SWAN, I joined Women's Exchange. At that time, I didn't know anything and just listened to what other people discussed at the meeting. But I was very glad to see that many women came together to work for women....

Nang Ei Lawnt Ying (2000)

What I had seen, heard and learned were all new to me. The most interesting thing that I learned was working in the organization and its structure. I was struck by the concept of "power sharing." The organization promotes creative thinking and new initiatives

Nang Moon Lao (2000)

During the internship, I met one woman abused by a man. She didn't want to go outside, and didn't want to meet with people. After she arrived at SWAN and stayed there, she got encouraged by SWAN staff. After some time, she became confident to meet with people again. I will never forgot this experience.

Nang Kham Oung (2000)

I became confident to work and speak. I also came to understand myself: what I would like to be and what I can do for people in the community.

Nang Kham Yard (2001)

SWAN gives me encouragement. It is like my family: I can share my feelings with everybody, It's a place to empower women, and the community, a place for women to work for our country, a space where you can improve yourself and others at the same time.

Nang Sorm (2001)

When I was an intern at SWAN, I could ask and learn what I would like to know. We got counseling training. With this skill, I have become more confident and been able to do public speaking.

Moan Kaein (2001)

We had a chance to learn about various issues including constitution, human rights, federalism, the UN system and Burma movement etc. This experience helped me a lot to do my work... I remember we all had to move to our SWAN safe house, which was for women in crisis, for our safety after SWAN released the report "License To Rape".

Nang Hearn (2003)

During the internship, we learned a lot of issues such as team building, public speaking, environment, community development and networking with other organizations. We had a chance to do field work on the border. It was very important for us to learn lessons from the ground.



Ying Charm Hom (2003)

I learned about unity and networking between staff, and networking with other organizations. I would like to thank SWAN for giving me a chance to be an intern at SWAN and giving an opportunity for Shan women to improve their skills.

Nang Mo Hom (2004)

In Shan State, when we talked about a “workshop”, it meant a place for fixing cars, a “car workshop”. When I was an intern, I was told that we had to attend a workshop. It was very strange for me, so I asked my

friends why we had to go to a “workshop”. Should we have to know how to fix a car? Only after I attended a workshop, I understood that a “workshop” meant a kind of “training”.

Nang Mwe Zarm (2004)

When I was an intern at SWAN, I understood that there were so many different issues and topics that we needed to learn. If we could use colors for all the topics we learnt, it would be very colorful.

Ying Kham (2004)

I understand more about politics, women’s rights, trafficking in women. I also learnt to share with others what we have learnt and to communicate better with people

Nang Yuwadee (2004)

We had to stay with friends who come from different parts of Shan State. So we learnt how to communicate with each other, help each other, empower and encourage each other, and how to work as a team.

Nang Gorn Noom (2004)

After the internship, I realized that I wanted to go back and empower my people. Also I wanted to be treated as equal

Nang Mwe Noom (2006)

We had a foreign teacher who trained us about political issues and English. At first I thought that I would not understand English. But when I tried to ask the teacher what I didn’t understand, I learnt to speak English.

Ying Hom (2006)

Through workshops and trainings, I gained more knowledge of issues and got experience communicating with other ethnic groups and other Shans and Thai. Moreover, I learnt about networking and understand more about communities and Shan organizations.

Nang Moon Lao (2006)

I had the opportunity to learn about other about politics and the Burma movement organizations.

Nang Si Wan (2006)

In my view, SWAN is an organization that will support and help people who are in danger and need help. It is also a place where people who love their nation and want to work for the people, can come and join and work together.



PHASE III: 2005 to the present



Expanding community programs

With the coordination of network partners locally and abroad, we have been able to attract more donors.²⁸ This has enabled us to expand our programs, including our education program, which provides basic schooling to children of refugees from Shan State. One significant contribution has been from the Danish Foreign Ministry, which supported the Danish Burma Committee (DBC) to raise funds for our Education program during the 2005 Christmas and New Year holiday season in Denmark.²⁹ The fundraising project involved the production of a docudrama about the situation of children of Shan refugees surviving as migrant workers in northern Thailand. During March and April 2005 a Danish TV production team came to the Thai-Shan border to shoot the film among the Shan refugee community working in orange orchards. Two SWAN members assisted with the production.

In November, the SWAN Education Program Coordinator was part of the DBC campaign launch of their Christmas calendar. She went on a speaking tour among schools in different parts of Denmark, and gave talks about Burma and the situation of the Shan refugee children. Each school received books about the Shan and cut-out paper dolls showing the clothing of different ethnic groups in Shan State.

Currently, SWAN is supporting sixteen schools (nine schools providing basic literacy skills and seven nurseries) which are run by communities along the Thai-Shan border.



SWAN at a school in Denmark

We are particularly proud of this achievement as no schools existed previously in most of these locations. However, many refugee and migrant children from Shan State remain without access to education, and we will continue to seek ways to enable more children to attend school.

Advocacy for refugee and migrant rights

We have continued to lobby for the recognition and protection of Shan refugees in Thailand, and their right to access services and support from humanitarian aid agencies. Various Thai networks have been extremely helpful in raising public awareness about the plight of Shan people through media, literature and songs and by lobbying at the parliamentary level. At the same time, we have been networking with NGOs working on migrant workers' rights for better treatment and working conditions for Shan refugees who have been

forced to enter the migrant labor market in Thailand for survival.³⁰



Shan refugee children seeking shelter during SPDC attack in April 2005

When the Thai Army ordered over 400 Shan refugees, including 208 orphans, to move back across the border into Shan State in May 2005, SWAN spearheaded an appeal against this action. We alerted Thai media and together with other Shan civil society groups wrote a written request to the Thai Prime Minister to reconsider the pushback order, as the refugees were being pushed back into an active war zone. Although this did not prevent the refugees from being pushed back, shortly afterwards, in June there was a joint appeal to the Thai government by representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, local and international NGOs, the Thai National Commission of Human Rights, the Senate Commission on Foreign Affairs,

calling for clear disclosure of information to the public about the Shan repatriation, and a halt to the pushing of Shan refugees into a war zone.

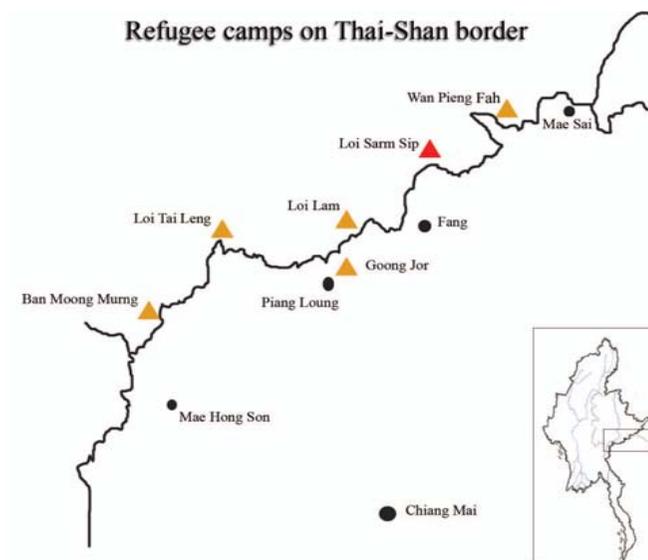


Senator Kraissak Choonhavan visits Shan refugees pushed back across the Thai border in 2005

In May 2007, the Thai Army forced another group of 91 refugees living on the northern Chiang Mai border to relocate deeper into Shan State. They were already on the Shan side of the border, but were “too easily seen from Thailand” and had to dismantle their houses in mid-rainy season and move a further 500 meters into Burma. SWAN again joined other Shan groups in writing an open letter to the Thai Prime Minister to protest this further unjustified and callous relocation.

Regrettably, the Thai government has yet to change its policies towards the refugees from Shan State. There currently exist six de facto camps (see map) along the

Thai-Shan border housing over 6,000 refugees and internally displaced, which have been set up since 2000, and whose numbers are continually growing. SWAN has assisted in providing humanitarian support and services for these refugees and continues to monitor their situation closely to seek to ensure that their safety and rights are protected. Balancing the need to publicize their situation with the need to prevent publicity backlashes that may affect their security remains a constant challenge.



Advocacy on aid policies

The challenge of seeking humanitarian aid for refugees for Shan State who are not legally recognized has been an impetus for SWAN to seek to understand the intricacies of international aid mechanisms and policies.

Aid agencies failing to bear public witness

Since 2002, when the military regime cited the presence of UN and other international aid agencies in Shan State as evidence that systematic sexual violence was not taking place, SWAN has been urging these agencies to speak out publicly about the regime's human rights abuses. To date, they have failed to do so.

Already in 2002, SWAN members had helped form an informal aid watchdog called "Concerned Individuals" to raise awareness about international aid issues among grassroots communities of Burma. Together we produced a booklet on the role of international aid in East Timor, and translated it into six ethnic languages. We also organized a signature campaign to express concern to governments and international aid agencies about the giving of humanitarian aid to Burma through the current military regime, and in June 2002, a SWAN member presented a position paper "No Aid to Burma through the Burmese military regime" at a Reality of Aid international advisory committee meeting in Manila, the Philippines.

Following the launching of a program by the World Food Program in March 2004 to provide US\$ 3.7 million for food for ex-poppy farmers in Shan State, SWAN joined other Shan State groups in raising concerns about how the program subsidized and

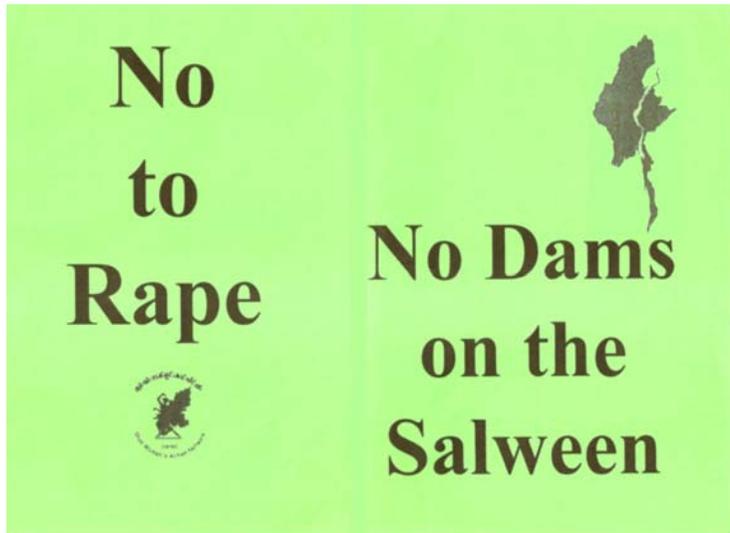
legitimized the Burmese military regime's abusive and unsustainable drug eradication policies. Several meetings were held with WFP staff to discuss these concerns. However, the WFP has continued to expand their program in Shan State, despite the fact that even the UNODC has reported that opium production in Burma has increased in recent years. In 2007, SWAN was able to alert international media to the fact that WFP rice purchasing procedures in Burma were benefiting the regime's cronies.³¹

Page 33, "*DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border*", a inquiry report released on Wednesday 25 July 2007 by the House of Commons International Development Committee

74. A number of witnesses told us that the Burma Army uses rape as a weapon of war on a widespread and systematic basis.¹⁵³ The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), whom we met during our visit to the Thai-Burma border, told us that Shan women were often victimised because they were an ethnic minority, and that girls as young as six were raped. SWAN works on and across the Thai border to document rape and other human rights abuses and to provide health and education services. As discussed below, SWAN said that whilst they received support from other donors, they had tried in vain to meet and discuss funding opportunities with DFID.¹⁵⁴ Other civil society groups said the same.¹⁵⁵ **Rape is used as a weapon of war by the Burmese Army and we call on the UK Government to make high-level representations about this atrocity to the Burmese regime. We reiterate our recommendation (see paragraph 26) that DFID should fund women's groups working on and across the border who document rape and other human rights abuses, and provide women's health and education services. The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) is one group particularly worthy of support.**

In April 2006, SWAN was invited by Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Burma Campaign UK to visit Britain. SWAN spoke at a parliamentary hearing, and also met with officials of the British Department for International Aid. At that time, DFID was not providing cross border assistance to Burma, and were not supporting any community based groups around Burma's borders. SWAN urged DFID to begin supporting border-based community groups, and to support cross-border programs. When the UK House of Commons International Development Committee organized a fact-finding delegation to the Thai-Burma border in May 2007, SWAN met the delegation together with other Burma's activists and made the same appeals. The delegation's report in July 2007 recommended that DFID provide cross-border aid, and support border-based community organisations. They specifically recommended support for SWAN. In April 2008, DFID began providing support to several community-based organizations from Burma operating along the Thai-Burma border, including SWAN.

SWAN materials for sustainable development



Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)



The villagers living along the Salween River in Shan State, Burma

The only thing Burma does not receive from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is *direct* financial assistance. But the ADB is actively engaging with Burma's military regime in many different ways. The ADB sends consultative missions to Burma to make findings and advice on macroeconomic and other reforms. The ADB also issues Country Assistance Plans for Burma. A representative of the ruling military regime sits on the ADB's Board of Executive Directors.

The most significant method of engagement, however, probably is done through the **Greater Mekong Subregion** economic cooperation program. Under this cover, the ADB is promoting plans for a deep-sea port, highways and a large dam to be built in Burma.

Evidence #1: Tasang Dam on the Salween River

The controversial Tasang project in ethnic Shan State, Burma is included in the ADB's "Regional Indicative Master Plan on Power Interconnection in the Greater Mekong Subregion" (**Mekong Power Grid**).

What is the Mekong Power Grid?

The Mekong Power Grid lays out a power connection scheme in the greater Mekong River region. The ADB strongly promotes this scheme. Under the scheme, broadly put, electricity generated by large-scale hydropower plants in China, Laos, and Burma will be exported and consumed in Thailand and Vietnam.

Advocating for sustainable development

From the outset we at SWAN have been gravely concerned at the rapid pace of environmental destruction in Shan State, due mainly to the large-scale resource extraction authorized by the Burmese military regime since 1988.

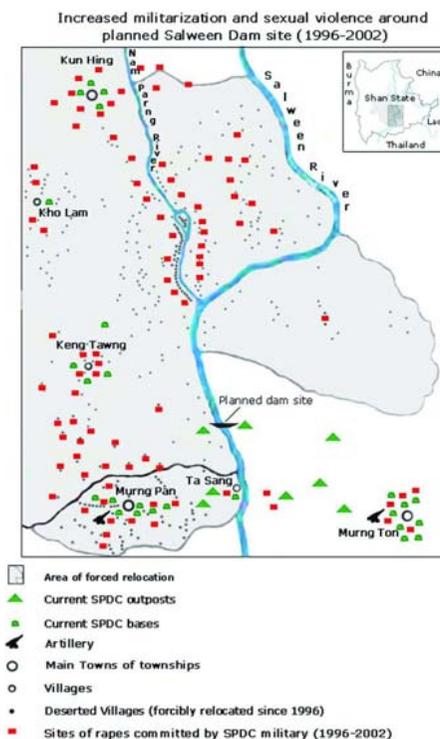
When news surfaced in 1999 that plans had been revived to dam the Salween River in Shan State to export electricity to Thailand, SWAN members joined other community groups from Burma and Thai NGOs in forming Salween Watch to monitor the dam developments. After the publication of Licence to Rape, we used the data from the report to link the dam plans with militarization and sexual abuse in the planned dam area (see map).

SWAN has also networked with regional NGOs to advocate on the Salween dam issue. In 2004, SWAN attended the annual meeting of the NGO Forum on ADB and lobbied ADB officials against their support for the Salween dams. SWAN also had the opportunity in 2004 to visit, together with the Thai and Chinese environmental activists, local communities living along the Salween/Nujiang in China who would be impacted by the 13 dams planned by China along the upper reaches of the river.

SWAN has publicly raised concerns over the impacts of the planned Salween Dams at several high level regional forums, including the Mekong Region Water Dialogue, held in Vientiane, Laos in July 2006, and an Energy Security Seminar organised by the former Thai

Energy Minister Piyasawasdi Amaranand in August 2006 in Bangkok. In November 2006, SWAN spoke at a conference for activists and academics from Thailand, China and Burma, entitled: “Mekong, Salween – People, Rivers and Lands of Southeast Asia.”

SWAN’s work for environmental protection was recognized in the November 2008 issue of Watershed, published by the Thai-based NGO TERRA (Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance), in which Charm Tong, our advocacy team member, was profiled as one of the leading young regional environmental activists.



International recognition of SWAN

Prizes awarded to SWAN and SWAN members

- 2005 - Peter Gruber Foundation's 2005 Women's Rights Award
- Asia's Heroes Award by Time Asia Magazine
- Marie Claire Award: One of Ten Women of the World
- Reebok Human Rights Award
- 2006 "The Best Practice Award" in the Upper Greater Mekong Sub-region by Rajabhat University, Chiang Rai in Thailand
- 2007 Student Peace Prize 2007 given by all the students in Norway
- 2008 - Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Award given by the International Republican Institute's (IRI) Women's Democracy Network
- Received Vital Voices Global Partnership Awards Human Rights Honoree on behalf of women of Burma

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to all our network friends and partners who nominated us for these awards.

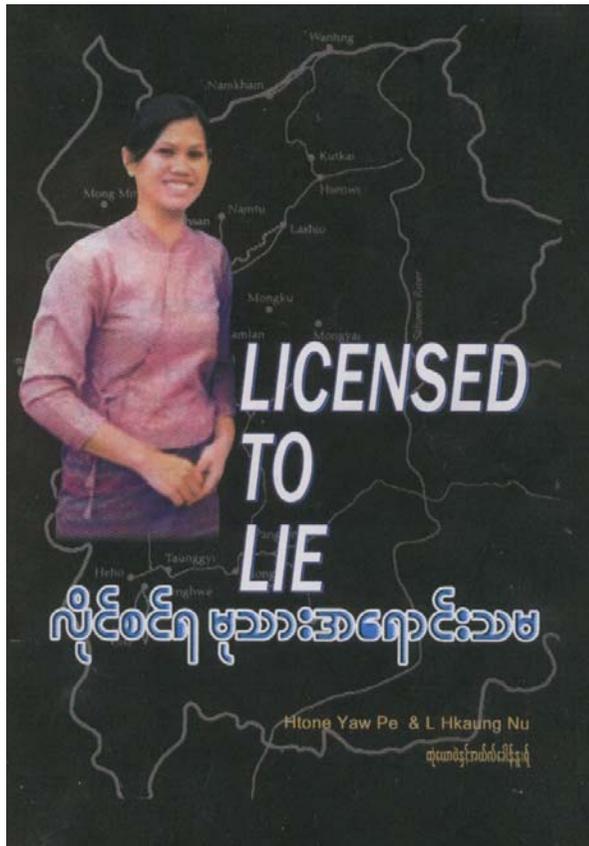
"Recognition" by the SPDC in recent years

- In October 2004, SPDC issued a public "Information Sheet" denouncing SWAN and the "preposterous" allegations of rape as a policy of the regime.³²
- In July 2005, SPDC organized rallies throughout Burma in different states and divisions to mark "Myanmar Women's Day." At the rallies, members of the state-controlled Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF) were ordered to denounce SWAN³³. They even denounced the US-based Peter Gruber Foundation which had selected SWAN for their 2005 Women's Rights Prize.
- In January 2006, SPDC printed and distributed 3,000 copies of a 117-page Burmese language book attacking the Shan opposition, including SWAN. It was called "Licensed to Lie."
- In August 2006, SPDC's mission in Cambodia issued a statement attacking SWAN member Charm Tong along with members of other opposition groups.³⁴
- In September 2007, in their country report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, SPDC again refuted the findings of Licence to Rape, mentioning SWAN.³⁵ In 2008, SPDC's FM radio was heard in Mae Sot broadcasting against SWAN member Charm Tong and her advocacy trips.

Apart from these explicit attacks against SWAN, there has also been repeated email and phone disruption and harassment, most likely directed by SPDC.



SWAN receiving Peter Gruber Prize in New York, September 2005



SPDC publication attacking SWAN, January 2006



SPDC letter attacking SWAN in August 2006

SWAN's commitment to the Women's League of Burma and the women's movement in Burma

As a founding member of the Women's League of Burma, we have been committed from the start to contributing our human resources to the alliance, in order to enable it to achieve its mission: the advancement of the status of women towards a just and peaceful society.

As SWAN's own capacity has developed³⁶ we have been able to contribute more of our trained and experienced staff to assist with WLB's operations.

Some WLB initiatives to which SWAN members made a significant contribution

2001	Signature campaign for World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) & advocacy trip to WCAR
Feb 2004- Mar 2005	Beijing Plus Ten Process & Advocacy trip to 49th UN Commission on the Status of Women
Sept 2004	Production of the report " <i>System of Impunity</i> ," documenting a nationwide pattern of sexual violence by the regime's armed forces and authorities in Burma
Oct 2005	Advocacy trip to the 10 th Association for Women's Rights and Development Conference in Bangkok
Nov 2007	Production of the report, " <i>Courage to Resist</i> "
Sept 2007-Jan 2009	2008 CEDAW process & its publications including the shadow report " <i>In the Shadow of the Junta</i> "
2003 to date	Lay-out & designs of many WLB publications
2003 to date	Building & maintaining WLB website
2005 to date	Initiating & implementing Women Against Violence programme
1999 to date	Linking WLB to regional and international women's networks and human rights networks

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Open Letter to Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai from Women's Organisations from Burma³⁷

Ref: Deportations and Abuse of Migrant Workers

The Hon. Mr. Chuan Leekpai
Prime Minister of Thailand
Fax: 66 2 629 9211

Nov. 9th 1999

Women's organisations from Burma call on the support and understanding of the Royal Thai Government regarding the policy of deporting migrant workers. While the government of Burma orders its troops to line the borders and refuse entry to their people, deportations are putting people at extreme risk. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the inhumane treatment of the troops. The abduction and rape of 15 young women by Burmese troops is an outrage that cannot be accepted.

We know that Thailand considers rape a very serious offense, particularly when committed by authorities whose duty is to protect their citizens and we call on the Royal Thai Government to demand that justice be brought against the rapists.

Considering the vulnerable position of illegal migrant women, we also urge you to sensitise all Thai authorities, including police and immigration officers, to actively prevent any abuse of migrant women and children on Thai soil.

We greatly fear that the continuation of the policy of deportation will result in the loss of lives and the rape and abuse of many more women and children. On humanitarian grounds, we urgently call on the Royal Thai Government to temporarily desist from deporting migrant workers. If migrants cannot work legally in Thailand and cannot be guaranteed security in their own country, they will

need permission to stay in safe and secure communities along the border with basic amenities and access to NGOs.

While we sincerely hope that the Royal Thai government will re-evaluate its policy on deportations and grant Burmese migrants safe refuge, the actions of the Burmese government must be addressed at a regional and international level. The stability of the region is in question while one of the members of ASEAN refuses to co-operate with its neighbour, even on an issue concerning its own citizens.

Women's Organisations from Burma:

Akha Women's Group
Burmese Women's Union
Kachin Women's Association
Karen Women's Organisation
Karen Refugee Camp Women's Group
Karenni National Women's Organisation
Lahu Women's Organisation
Migrant Women's Network
Organisation for the Protection of Women's and Children's Rights
Palaung (Ta-ang) Women's Organisation
Shan Women's Action Network
Tavoyan Women's Union

For further information, please fax 66 53 808 278

Appendix 2: Letter to the Editors of The Nation from the Embassy of Burma

Mailbag : Reports of assaults, rapes are fabricated

Date: 11/12/99 Publication: The Nation Section: Mailbag Reports of assaults, rapes are fabricated

The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and has the honour to draw the latter's attention to the news reports carried in The Bangkok Post on November 4 and 8 and The Nation on November 4 and 9 alleging that 15 women from among the illegal Myanmar immigrants who have been repatriated from Mae Sot district in Tak province were raped by Myanmar soldiers and that Myanmar troops threatened to shoot a group of Myanmar workers repatriated by Thai authorities.

In this connection, the embassy wishes to state that the alleged reports are just fabrication aimed solely at vilifying and defaming the Myanmar authorities and sensationalising the repatriation of Myanmar illegal immigrants.

The embassy, therefore, would like to seek the ministry's assistance in deterring the dissemination of such fabricated reports which are deliberate attempts at fostering ill-will and misunderstanding between our two countries.

The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand the assurances of its highest consideration.

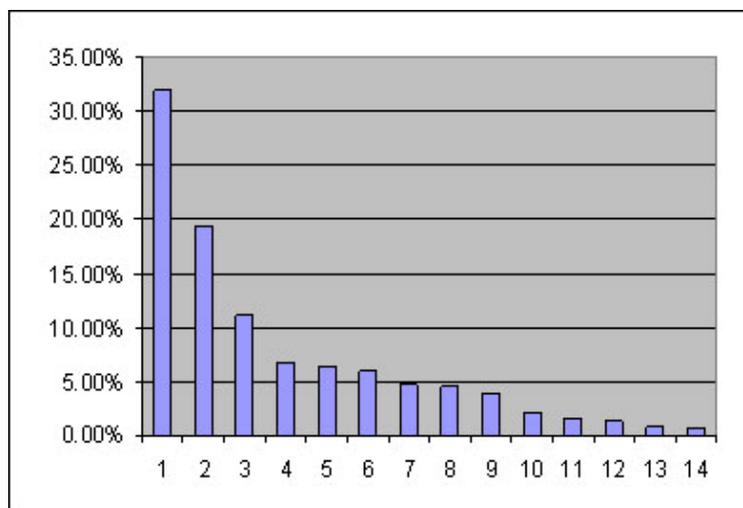
(Unsigned)

Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
BANGKOK

Appendix 3

SWAN main donors in 2008

1. DBC	Danish Burma Committee	Denmark	31.90%
2. DFID	Department For International Development	UK	19.37%
3. NCA	Norwegian Church Aid	Norway	11.03%
4. HWF	Help without Frontiers	Germany	6.81%
5. HART	Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust	UK	6.41%
6. Austcare	Austcare	Australia	5.98%
7. AJWS	American Jewish World Service	US	4.65%
8. NED	National Endowment for Democracy	US	4.50%
9. BLL	Burma Lifeline	US	3.79%
10. IWDA	International Women's Development Agency	Australia	2.13%
11. BRC	Burma Relief Center	Thailand	1.53%
12. PRIVATE	Private donations		1.27%
13.FPB	Foundation for the People of Burma	US	0.77%
14.COE	Children on the Edge	UK	0.65%
			100%



Endnotes

¹ The Nation, Burmese Women Tell PM, 11 November 1999 .

² Comprehensive accounts on the 1999 deportation were published as a report, *Dignity Denied*, by Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

³ See Appendix: 1

⁴ See Appendix: 2

⁵ The World Conference on Racism

⁶ The campaign started in July and continued until the end of August 2001, collecting at least 51,487 signatures. (Source: Volume (17) September 2001 issue of Dove Magazine, Page 30-33. Also visit Advocacy page of WLB website: www.womenofburma.org for further information about the campaign, and the trip.

⁷ 83% of the rapes were committed by officers. 61% of the rapes were gang-rapes. In some cases, women were raped repeatedly for 4 months by the troops. In 25% of the cases, the women were murdered after rape. Out of 173 cases, in only one case was the perpetrator punished.

⁸ Joint petition online launched by Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Alternative Asean Network on Burma (Altsean Burma), Thailand & Friends without Border. Source:<http://www.petitiononline.com/Forumasi/petition.html>

⁹ <http://www.petitiononline.com/Forumasi/petition.html>

¹⁰ http://www.apwld.org/united_call_for_shan_women.pdf & <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days02/SAENG>

¹¹ <http://www.friends-of-shan.de/> / German address< www.freunde-der-shan.de>

¹² <http://www.apwld.org>

¹³ 2002 consultation meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the 2003 consultation meetings with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders and UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

¹⁴ <http://www.labor.net.au/news/2485.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.equalitynow.org>

¹⁶ Extract from a paper entitled, *Licene to Rape* submitted to Gender and Human Security Conference, Mc.Gill University (February 5-7, 2004)

¹⁷ In August 2002, it was forced to conduct its own “investigation” into sexual violence in Shan State due to mounting international pressure.

¹⁸ The New Light of Myanmar, issued on 30 July 2002

¹⁹ Summarizing the report, local and international responses, and our calls

²⁰ Burmese/Thai/ English/Shan

²¹ Special thanks to Moe Kyaw and Dr.Helen Michaelsen, who initially assisted us.

²² A SWAN member was General Secretary of the Women’s League of Burma for the 2003- 2004 term. For further information on WLB, see <www.womenofburma.org>

²³ We are deeply grateful to Noi Pornpen, Chalida Tajaroensuk and Somchai Homlor of Forum Asia, and Merci of IID, in Manila who assisted us at this time.

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- ²⁴ However, in the hope that further official investigations along the border might heighten the pressure on the regime, SWAN facilitated a research investigation carried out by the US State Department in August 2002, and a mission sent by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma in October 2002. In the latter case, SWAN, wherever possible, used witness testimony rather than letting the researcher, who was male, interview rape survivors directly.
- ²⁵ SWAN remains concerned about any international investigations into military rape in Burma, or international court cases (including through the International Criminal Court) while the regime remains in power because there is no guarantee for safety of community members inside Burma.
- ²⁶ Thai Senator Kraisak Choonhavan was the head of the Thai Senate Foreign Affairs Committee at that time. He visited the refugees in August 2002, together with reporters from Thai ITV, and also met with SWAN about the Licence to Rape report. He held a press conference urging the Thai government to provide asylum to the refugees and referred to the systematic sexual violence in Shan State. Shortly afterwards, Thai ITV also aired a documentary program on the Shan refugee situation and the Licence to Rape report.
- ²⁷ The fighting occurred in May 2002, shortly before the release of Licence to Rape
- ²⁸ SWAN main donors in 2008 income can be seen in Appendix 3
- ²⁹ This is an annual raising fund project for Danida to support a selected project of a developing country. SWAN's Education Program was selected for 2005.
- ³⁰ Currently SWAN is a member of ANM (Action Network for Migrants) and MMN (Mekong Migration Network)
- ³¹ *Aid for Burmese 'benefits regime'*, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22560632-2702,00.html>
- ³² Information sheet NO. D- 3197 (I/L) issued on 13 October 2004 by Myanmar Information Committee
- ³³ SPDC denounced SWAN along with WLB and all opposition groups. Source: The New Light of Myanmar, 's issues from July 7 – 13, 2005.
- ³⁴ Letter No. 148/ 21 – 15, issued on 24 August 2006 by SPDC's mission in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- ³⁵ United Nations CEDAW/C/MMR/3
- ³⁶ In recent years, SWAN has carried out a series of organizational development workshops to improve our operations at all levels
- ³⁷ Original Thai letter on file in SWAN database