



Press Release

The Shan Women's Action Network Addresses Gaps in Women's Peace and Security for the 16-Days of Activism Campaign

By Shan Women's Action Network

[November 25, 2018] – The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) is recognizing the 16 Days of Activism by addressing the challenges young girls and women face in conflict in Burma through a social media campaign called #WhyNoWomen. Every year since 1991, organizations, individuals, advocates and allies have come together around the world to expose the problem of violence against women in its various contexts. The campaign runs from 25 November to 10 December.

SWAN's #WhyNoWomen campaign shares the consequences of active conflict on civilians – particularly rural women, through a series of social media posts that provide 16 reasons why the participation of women in matters of peace and security is limited and 16 subsequent recommendations for how their protection and participation can be promoted at various levels.

"Women do not accept the portrayal of the victim in their narrative. Where there is fear, there is resilience and despite the thousands who have been subjected to inhumane behavior at the hands of security forces - women's groups, individuals and advocates are leading calls for stronger accountability mechanisms," said SWAN Director, Nang Hearn.

Gender-based violence in conflict is an epidemic in Burma. The presence of armed actors has increased particularly in Shan and Kachin States where over 100,000 civilians have been forcibly displaced since 30 September 2018. Young girls and women are among the most vulnerable in conflict settings and yet too often are not included in discussions on peace and security. Women are faced with intimidation, threats and violence from security forces and are presented with little to no protection mechanisms to ensure their security. Military troops must withdrawal from ethnic areas immediately and offer redress for victims by allowing their cases to be heard in civilian courts if there is to be true and meaningful peace.

In order for peace to be mutually beneficial and accessible, policies must consider the challenges women are faced with. Peace cannot be obtained by a single gender, religion, or ethnicity – true and lasting peace requires compromise to uphold the dignity of all human rights. Evidence to suggest women's leadership pathways are not being made accessible enough are revealed in a recent policy paper by the Women's League of Burma, which deems the four principles adopted on gender equality at the UPC insufficient to bring about sustainable change for the advancement

of women. Further, a sincerer effort must be made to promote an inclusive environment respective of the interests of both men and women.

By sharing a message that highlights the challenges women face from a security perspective, as well as providing a recommendation for their protection and greater agency, SWAN believes the campaign can advance the understanding of women, peace and security in Burma. Throughout the campaign SWAN maintains that the goal is not to present women as victims but as individuals who are resilient across the circumstances they have been forced to confront. Far from victims, women continue to lead as agents of change in their communities.

The #WhyNoWomen campaign will be shared on all of SWAN's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) in Shan, Burmese and English.

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The Shan Women's Action Network is working for gender equality and justice for Shan women in the struggle for social and political change in Burma.