



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Weaving Bonds Across Borders
(WBAB)

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Our mission

Weaving Bonds Across Borders is a women-led network that is building the power and leadership of youth from grassroots communities to work together for peace, women's rights, and environmental justice.

We promote leadership from and exchange between the grassroots and Global South through training, peacebuilding, and support for youth and community-led actions.

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Mekong Program/Asia Pacific

Training and Leadership Development

Weaving Bonds Across Borders supported 12 young women and youth (9 women and 3 men) from 9 countries, namely Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines to join 20 days of workshop on peacebuilding, gender, and The Training of Trainers (TOT) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants reported that the workshop had increased their confidence, practical skills, and knowledge to take on leadership roles in their communities and built solidarity on the different religions and ethnicities.

Asia Youth Peacebuilding and Gender skills workshop



Figure 1 Regional Workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand

Weaving Bonds Across Borders successfully organized an intensive program to teach Peacebuilding and Gender Skills to youth from conflict-affected and marginalized communities across Asia. The workshop was held from July 1st – 20th, 2017 at the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP) in Mae Rim district, 40 minutes from Chiang Mai City, Northern Thailand.

In order to create an international forum for youth to discuss peace-building and gender contexts across the Asia-Pacific region, 12 participants were selected to represent the Mekong countries, ASEAN countries, and South Asian countries. The 20-day workshop with 6 subjects engaged a transformative approach to gender and

conflict by combining peace and gender theories, participatory methods, personal peacebuilding, experiential education through field visits, and practical skills in training, facilitation, project cycle management, and project design.

The peacebuilding class linked every participant's local context and connected them to physical, structural, and cultural violence. Moreover, all the valuable information helped participants to see their own position and identity in society. The peacebuilding class is further linked to marginalized groups and this knowledge has applied to ethnic conflict in Myanmar and indigenous women's rights struggle in India and Nepal.

In the gender class, the gender knowledge made a clear analysis of gender and sex in



Figure 2 Regional Workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand

our society and opened a participatory discussion for all people in the class. This class helped participants to share their personal experiences and how these life experiences linked to gender issues in their communities and societies.

During the 20-day training course, another subject that received a lot of attention from the participants was theatrical performances. Organized in collaboration with the Makhampoon Theatre Group in Chiang Dao district, this session gave the participants the creative and innovative tools to brainstorm the conflict transformation through the arts and theatre. Participants learned how to present and lead discussions on social issues including conflict, discrimination, gender, power, and corruption in their communities through using techniques of dialogue theatre including performance and frozen images.

Weaving Bonds
Across Borders



Figure 5 Regional Workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand

worked to address the issues of physical



Figure 3 Regional Workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand

violence, structural violence, cultural violence, marginalized groups, ethnic conflicts, and indigenous women's rights struggle to let participants see their own position and identity in society.



Figure 4 Regional Workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand

These workshops helped participants, who are youth from indigenous, minority, and

conflict-affected areas across Asia, building solidarity; learning, and exchanging across borders; building better understanding between each other; building inner peace among themselves and their communities; and building up their individual confidence and belief in themselves. Youth also learned basic skills to heal from trauma caused by war, conflict, and violence at the personal and community level through learning about mindfulness, listening, and empathic communication skills. Moreover, they made plans to share these skills with their communities.

Women's Leadership and Gender Equality

Weaving Bonds Across Borders promoted women's rights and women's leadership by encouraging women to take the lead in our work and also training men participants about gender equality. In all our workshops, we gave our first consideration to young women who have fewer opportunities in their communities/societies. Women's rights, women's empowerment, and women leadership are the main curriculum in all of our workshops, in particular building trust, self-confidence, and cultural differences among women, as well as training young men to understand women's rights.

"I appreciate the Weaving Bonds Across Borders training with gender class, especially the "equity and equality" session. In my understanding, the vulnerable community has already suffered more than other communities nearby. If we provide those communities with the same resources, the more disadvantaged community would likely still be behind the others. However, if we can understand their needs based on their basic requirements, we can support them until they achieve the same standards as the others."

--- Participant from Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai

"Many people did not pay much attention to indigenous women's rights. Actually, indigenous women are facing serious gender issues in their communities."

--- Participant from Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai

"Before I only had opportunities to learn gender issues among people from Mekong region, but in this workshop, I had an opportunity to learn new types of gender issues from countries like Nepal, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines."

--- Participant from Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai

"This class is so important for my life because before I experienced a lot of stress and exhaustion working in my organization. I even had to stop working for a few months because I got ill from my work. So, I think this subject is very important especially for those who work in women organizations."

--- Participant from Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai

"We have ethnic conflicts in our country, so peacebuilding is really important for us to build better understanding among different ethnic minorities. When we have a better understanding among ourselves, we can work together for social justice."

--- Participant from Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai

Myanmar/ Burma

Training and Leadership Development

Weaving Bonds Across Borders promoted gender equality and environmental protection at the local level, and improved youths' proposal writing and communication skills in Shan State, Myanmar/Burma.

In December 2017, Weaving Bonds Across Borders organized a local workshop on proposal writing, project report, and finance management in Taunggyi, the capital city of Shan State, Myanmar/Burma. There were 25 participants (8 men and 17 women) attending this workshop. These youths are from six different ethnic groups which are Shan, Burman, Kayan, Rakhine, Pa-Oh and Kayin.

"It will be really great if you can go to our community and give some training like this. Because not so many of us can travel to Taunggyi."

---Participant from the local workshop in Myanmar

"I like the content of the training from the beginning to the end. But, what I like the most is the financial report session because it is the main thing for the organization to work on after implementing the project and it is also interesting."

---Participant from the local workshop in Myanmar

In this workshop, the participants learned how to link gender and environmental issues in terms of proposal writing development and donor communications. They further learned project reports and finance management skills from well-experienced local trainers.

Many of our participants reported that this local workshop was not only providing its support at the individual level but also at the community level because many of them do not have the skills to develop project proposals and have less experience in project management.

"This workshop is not only good for us but also benefits our community too. However, it will be better if we have more time to practice more on proposal writing as it is very useful. We can use it right away."

---Participant from the local workshop in Myanmar

Alumni Program and Alumni-Led Action

Weaving Bonds Across Borders continued to support youth participants after the regional workshop through partner organizations' forums, internships, and small grant programs. Through our alumni program, we continued to motivate and support youths to keep doing work in their communities. Weaving Bonds also selected 5 alumni's stories on gender equality, environmental protection and human rights issues, and helped our alumni to improve their stories and writing skills. In addition, our alumni program kept our network updated, shared inspiring stories, news, and scholarship information among our alumni.

Forums and Youth Leadership

The Mekong Youth Forum

We supported the 5 alumni who attended the Mekong Youth Forum organized by Mekong Youth Assembly (MYA) to learn about ecological child rights, environmental issues, and advocacy skills with other participants from Mekong region countries. Moreover, the alumni could expand their network and deepen their knowledge on environmental issues and improve their skills in advocacy at the same time to raise their concerns and voices to stakeholders such as AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) on the environment and the rights of the children in the context of river and hydropower development.

Asia Pacific Feminist Forum

Weaving Bonds Across Borders also provided opportunities for its staff and one intern to join **Asia Pacific Feminist Forum** on 7 - 9 September 2017 which was organized by the APWLD (Asia Pacific Women, Law and Development). In this forum, the staff got a chance to talk to donors and expanded its networks among the Asia Pacific feminists. The staff learned about organization development under a feminist approach and security knowledge for human rights defenders and women's rights for natural resource management at the regional level.

Small Grants Program

From April 2017 to August 2018, Weaving Bonds Across Borders provided two small grants for two regional alumni from Indonesia and Nepal to work on gender equality in their communities through conducting workshops, and Weaving Bonds helped them to develop project proposals and project reports (see more details in Weaving Bonds 2018 Annual Report).

Internship Program

'Internships program' is a program that welcomes women from the Mekong countries to work with us for 2 - 3 months. This program gives an internship opportunity to exchange their experience and knowledge with other interns and it will give them a good time to attend meetings, training, and fieldwork with our network organizations. In addition, the young women will learn and help each other during the internship program. In 2017, Tzarm Noan from Shan State and Minh Chau from Vietnam joined the program.

Youth Stories

A Story from Bindu, Nepal

Bindu was born in a remote area in the hill region called Sahan village, Sindhuli District, Nepal. She is from the Majhi indigenous group. In 2016, she established her own organization called Majhi Filmmaker Association with 7 members. Initially, she faced a lot of challenges, no one believed in her ability as a woman and no one gave her financial support. Even though she thought she had nothing, she never gave up. She created 2 full-length movies and 5 short films to promote the Majhi Indigenous people's culture and indigenous women's rights.

As Bindu explained, indigenous women in Nepal have been experiencing not only gender-based discrimination but also ethnic discrimination and they are systematically excluded by the state and other Chhetri and Bahun communities. In the sense of this reality, she has been working to achieve gender equality and equity through securing constitutional, political, legal, socio-cultural, economic, and traditional rights of Nepali indigenous women.



“Peacebuilding and gender skills are some of the important subjects for me. It helps me to build up my capacity and to improve my knowledge to fight for women’s rights and to promote the indigenous ethnic rights.”

A Story from Wening, Indonesia

Wening has deep experience engaging with many religious communities to build understanding and reduce prejudice. Currently, she is managing a women's interfaith community called Srikandi Lintas Iman. Her job is at the Institute of Southeast Asian Islam (ISAI) in Islamic State University of UIN SunanKalijaga.



Wening is passionate about equality, the rights of women, and how religion has been misused to control others in the interests of certain groups of people.

During the workshop, she was touched and found sympathy from the stories shared by the members. In the gender classes, she shared a lot about the issues women in her community are facing.

"We were born and grew up, lived in expectation, an obedient daughter, a gentlewoman, a wife to take care of the family, and a mother who sacrifices all for the children. I do not think these things are bad, but not all roads are the same, and not all women are happy with life living in the shadow of somebody".

A Story from Ammaris, the Philippines

Ammaris from Cotabato City, a culturally and religiously diverse community heavily populated by Muslims and Christians respectively. As a true-blue Mindana born and raised smack in the middle of conflict, he has observed how the volatile security situation in the area heavily affected the lives of the civilians.

His uncle is a *kamal* and a member of a dispute resolution team. He has been attending their council meetings whenever they are resolving disputes and conflicts, an experience that sparked his interest in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in general. Currently, he is residing in North which is known for its universities, the frequent armed conflict, and its significant population of the LGBT community.

After the workshop, Ammar plans to use the lessons learned by working in Marawi due to the urgent crisis there at present.



"After the workshop, I would like to help the people of Marawi that were affected by the ongoing Marawi crisis.... I want to work on helping with the normalization process when the evacuees finally return to their homes. The normalization workshop will include conduct of a psycho-social debriefing for those who may have experienced trauma because of the incident and a workshop on promoting a culture of peace."

A story from Yeang, Cambodia

Yeang was born in a rural province of Cambodia and he moved to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia in 2003. He has grown up to be a very active person in his community. As a university student, he co-founded a youth organization working on children and youth empowerment with his friends. In 2014, he started to work as a freelance project officer on gender and sexual reproductive health rights. He has won several debate competitions at the end of 2015, and he was recognized as the Youth Champion for Child Rights in Cambodia by UNICEF Cambodia. Then he moved to Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum where he worked on PR and fundraising communications for their peacebuilding project.

In 2017, he joined WBAB's peacebuilding and gender program in Chiang Mai of Thailand, and he became a member of the Mekong Youth Assembly later. After the Weaving Bonds workshop, Yeang found that he has a strong interest in peacebuilding and conflict transformation and his community also needs it. Currently, he is working as Program Director and Peacebuilding Related Trainer for Sarus Cambodia to fulfill his passion for peace leadership. He joined many regional programs such as the Environmental Symposium in Thailand, ASEAN Youth Forum, ASEAN People Forum, and Youth and Sport Taskforce in the Philippines, and the International Conference on ECOSOC Forum in New York, United States.



After he gained many experiences and skills, he has led many regional programs in Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. All of those experiences helped him to become a member of the United Nations Youth Advisory Panel, the Steering Committee of UN Joint Program on Youth Employment in Cambodia, the National Committee on Cambodian Youth

Development Index, and a Regional member of the Youth and Sports Taskforce of UNESCO.

"I want to work as a consultant toward gender, peacebuilding, and youth empowerment. I strongly believe that I can bring inclusive voices to the policymakers to make society better."

Financial Report

2017 Revenue	Amount in USD
Individuals and community donations	9,535
Foundation Grants USD (Oxfam and the Asia Foundation)	43,920
Total Revenue	53,455

2017 Expenditure	Amount in USD
Program expenses	21,098
Staffing cost	17,903
Overhead and Emergency Fund	1,087
Total Program Expenses	40,088

Balance on Hand (put the date here Dec 2017)	13,367
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APPRECIATIONS

Our deepest thanks go to the following individuals and organizations who have supported our work with financial support, advice, hard work, and/or partnership in 2017

- *The Asia Foundation*
- *Oxfam*
- *Gender and Development Research Institute*
- *Thai Volunteer Service*
- *Mekong Youth Journey*
- *Mekong Alumni Network*
- *EarthRights International*
- *Mekong Youth Assembly*
- *International Accountability Project*
- *Asia Indigenous People's Pact*
- *Mong Pan Youth Association (Myanmar)*

Friends and Network

To those of you who have supported our work with contributions of your efforts, including our trainers, resource persons, advisors, and others that are unnamed on the lists, but we deeply appreciate the heartfelt contributions of your time and energy. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support and commitment to work together for a better world. To support our work or become a monthly donor, please contact us or visit

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