

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Weaving Bonds Across Borders (WBAB)

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# OUR MISSION

Weaving Bonds Across Borders (WBAB) 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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## LAND RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

In the Mekong and Salween region countries, grassroots communities have been facing widespread dams, mining, and other development projects, leading to displacement, destruction of local livelihoods, and damage to watersheds. The problem is compounded by insufficient knowledge on gender/women's rights, environmental issues, and legal rights, which results in a lack of participation by local people, especially women and youth in community resource management and advocacy. Weaving Bonds has found that our participants and alumni urgently need capacity building skills to advance their knowledge on gender/women's rights and water governance and environmental issues in their communities, practical skills to be able to lead activities to address these issues and respond to the impacts, and opportunities to engage in advocacy at a national or regional level.

### OUR FUTURE COMMUNITY LEADERS: ACTION FOR GENDER AND LAND RIGHTS IN SHAN STATE (GENDER EQUALITY AND LAND RIGHTS AWARENESS WORKSHOP)

Weaving Bonds Across Borders has conducted its 2019 regional workshop on the topic of 'Our Future Community Leaders: Action for Gender and Land Rights in Shan State (Gender Equality and Land Rights Awareness Workshop)' in Taunggyi city, Shan State, Myanmar from January 7-17, 2019. There are 13 participants (7 women and 6 men) from Myanmar and Cambodia attended this workshop. This workshop focused on land rights, land law, gender equality, and water issues. There are some potential impacts from the development project along the Than Lwin (Salween) River Basin in Myanmar, so it covered the basic environmental issue, water governance, and digital video training for advocacy purposes.



Figure 1 Regional workshop on 'Our Future Community Leaders: Action for Gender and Land Rights' in Shan State, Myanmar

This workshop enhanced participants' confidence and stabilized participants' future goals. Overall, this workshop helped participants to build a better understanding among each other, learned the transnational land issues between Myanmar and Cambodia, and also learned documentary and photography skills through field study with local community members.

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"All activities changed my attitude and inspired me to do some meaningful things for my community"

*Cambodian participant*

"Before this workshop, I could not identify what is right and wrong. But after a 10-days workshop, I got the legal knowledge on land rights, so I clearly know what is right and wrong. I do not have to be afraid of anybody if I do it legally and believe in myself that I could help youth in our community."

*Burmese participant*

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Figure 2 Local workshop on 'Our Future Community Leaders: Action for Gender and Land Rights' in Shan State, Myanmar



Figure 3 Local workshop on 'Our Future Community Leaders: Action for Gender and Land Rights' in Shan State, Myanmar

#### WHERE RIVERS MEET OUR FUTURE COMMUNITY LEADERS: ALUMNI-LED WORKSHOP AND RESEARCH IN SHAN STATE, MYANMAR

On October 24-31, 2019, Weaving Bonds conducted its local workshop on environmental issues, gender inequality, women's leadership, land rights, and research writing. It improved the participants' legal awareness of land rights and enhanced their research skills through interviews with local people. There were 10 youths (4 women and 6 men) participated in the workshop from different ethnic backgrounds which are Inn-thar, Pa-O, Danu, Shan, Lahu and Taung-Yoe.

Moreover, the participants had a chance to join the Coal Power Plant impact boycott event in Tigit Township. There were many people from Karen, Shan and Kayan State plus local people who are facing toxic waste from the mining, launching this event. On this day, they learned the huge



Figure 4 Local workshop in Shan State, Myanmar



Figure 5 Coal Power Plant boycott event in Tigit Township, Myanmar



Figure 6 Local workshop in Shan State, Myanmar



effects of coal mining. For example, when toxic poison is released into the Inle Lake, it affects people's livelihoods who live nearby the Lake. They also knew how to insist on their rights and keep those experiences to adapt for their future.

Furthermore, we invited our alumni, Danu Women Group, to share their experience on the Environment, Land rights, and Gender issues. Weaving Bonds could see more than changing from our alumni. They have been working for their rights. We are much honored to see them growing up.

## ALUMNI PROGRAM AND ALUMNI-LED ACTION

### SMALL GRANT

In 2019, Weaving Bonds funded two small projects from our alumni in Myanmar to implement projects in their communities. The first project was done by Khin Swe Oo and Nwe Nwe Soe, who did research on decline of water resources due to man-made activities and climate change in Thein Khone communities in Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan State, Myanmar. Another project was a training in Pong Taw Choke village, Shan State, Myanmar led by Khun Zaw Naung.

#### A RESEARCH STUDY ON WOMEN'S ROLES IN WATER MANAGEMENT

The research project by Khin Swe Oo and Nwe Nwe Soe in the area of Dalapin Village, Thein Khone village-tract, Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan State, Myanmar organized from 25 March - 29 April, 2019. This research was the first step for them to raise awareness about water issues in the meantime by interviewing 30 farmers (15 women and 15 men) from local communities.

After this project, they have found that the relationship among the project team members, supporting members, and community, was stronger. They were invited to do more in water management with them in the future which is the successful networking and presenting women leadership from our alumni.



Figure 7 Small grant activity in Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan State, Myanmar



Figure 8 Small grant activity in Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan State, Myanmar



Figure 9 Small grant activity in Ywar Ngan Township, Southern Shan State, Myanmar

## INTRO TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP – MANAGEMENT SKILL' TRAINING

The training project by Khun Zaw Naung in Pong Taw Choke village, Shan State, Myanmar, from April 5-8, 2019. Pong Taw Choke village is located on the border of Pa-O Self-Administered Zone and Taunggyi government-controlled area. This village is affected by the KBZ cement factory. The training encouraged the young people from Pong Taw Choke community to find out an alternative solution and how their environmental and social lives have been destroyed by the development project. There were 22 young people (15 women and 7 men) from Paung Taw Choke Village, including informal education, middle school, high school, and university students.



Figure 10 Small grant activity in Pong Taw Choke village, Shan State, Myanmar

This training was very inspiring and empowering to Khun Zaw Naung and the team to keep running the other activities in their community.



Figure 11 Small grant activity in Pong Taw Choke village, Shan State, Myanmar



Figure 12 Small grant activity in Pong Taw Choke village, Shan State, Myanmar



## STORY OF CHANGE

**W**eaving Bonds has collected the 14 stories from WBAB staff, alumni, and partner organizations. We made a booklet, and there are 12 women and 2 men stories in relation to gender and environment. In this booklet, the young woman leaders shared their life experiences, commitment to social justice, and vision for the future. The purpose of this project is that these stories will empower other women and youth whose works are engaged with environmental and gender issues in their regions. (Please click [here](#) to download)

In this story of change, WBAB's staff, alumni, and board members shared their life stories, work experiences, and future action plans in relation to gender issues, human rights issues, environmental protection, and social justice in different countries. Generally, the story of change is divided into three parts: 1) youths' experiences before they are attending WBAB's regional and local workshops, 2) youths' experiences after they are attending WBAB's regional and local workshops, 3) youths' future actions on gender equality and community development.

Through this project, WBAB could encourage more youths to participate in community activities and could promote women's leadership development.



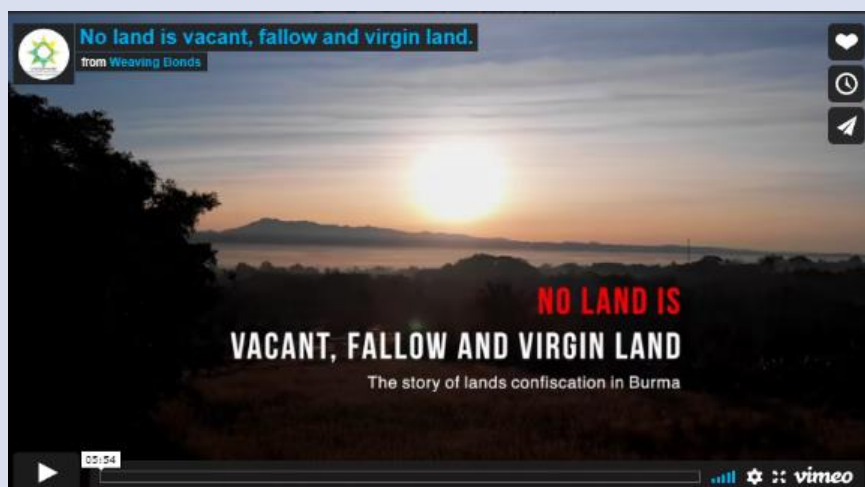
## VIDEO DOCUMENTARY ON LAND RIGHTS

In the 2019 regional workshop, Weaving Bonds participants went to Hsi Hseng Township, Shan State, Myanmar to learn the land rights issues. According to our field study, we learned that land grabbing was a serious issue in communities like Naung Lon village and Li-su village. Due to its special location and political context, the outside people are unable to access these communities and work closely with local people, so the WBAB team is the first group to approach the local people. We learned that not many people know the land-grabbing issues in this area yet because the local authorities have blocked the information. Thus, WBAB conducted a *'No Land is Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land'* video documentary on land rights, and this documentary encouraged local people to advocate land issues and promote community rights.

This documentary was conducted in Hsi Hseng Township located in the Southern Shan State where it is controlled by Pa-O National Army, so it is in the conflict zone. According to our interviews with the local youths and local people, we learned that a large scale of land grabbing has happened in Hsi Hseng Township since 1991. Now, this township has been continually facing a variety of land issues from the development projects (e.g. railway), military government, and Pa-Oh National Organization. The local people's life is tightly bound to land and they depend on

agricultural land to maintain their livelihood for many generations. However, the military government and Pa-Oh National Organization have been taking land from the local people and making local people landless and homeless.

In this project, WBAB spent 20 days understanding the local situation through interviews with local youths and local villagers in Hsi Hseng Township under Mong Pan Youth Association's support. This video is based on local voices, which shows land rights issues and promotes women's rights at the community level. This video documentary is also used by local communities themselves to advocate their land rights with different stakeholders in 2019. Please visit our website: <http://www.weavingbondsacrossborders.org>



## FINANCIAL REPORT

<b>2019 Revenue</b>	<b>Amount in USD</b>
Individuals and community donations	10,067
Foundation Grants (Oxfam, Tharthi Myay Foundation, the Samdhana Institute)	19,617
Total Revenue	29,684

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<b>2019 Expenditure</b>	<b>Amount in USD</b>
Program expenses	16,157
Staffing cost	12,458
Overhead and Emergency Fund	661
Total Program Expenses	29,276

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Balance on Hand (As of 31 Dec 2019)	408
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## APPRECIATIONS

OUR DEEPEST THANKS GO TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR WORK WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT, ADVICE, EFFORTS AND/OR PARTNERSHIP IN 2019

- Oxfam
- The Samdhana Institute
- Tharthi Myay Foundation (TMF)
- Mong Pan Youth Association (Myanmar)
- WBAB network and partner organizations
- WBAB alumni
- Mekong Alumni Network
- EarthRights International
- Mekong Youth Assembly
- Mong Pan Youth Association (Myanmar)
- Villagers in Hsi Hseng Township, Shan State, Myanmar
- Villagers in Pong Taw Choke Township, Shan State, Myanmar
- Villagers in Dalapin Village, Thein Khone villages group, Ywar Ngan Township, Shan State, 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 network: there are too many of you to count, but we deeply appreciate your 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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