



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

# Introduction

## **A year of dictatorship, a year of repression, a year of abuse.....**

Since the 1st of February 2021 Myanmar turned again in a military dictatorship, the army took over government control and has suppressed and abused their people ever since. Myanmar has a long history of dictatorship, as the military always has a very firm base of supporters. When its top rulers decide it is time to take charge again, as they want to gain more power and wealth, they turnover whatever is needed and don't hesitate to push everything and everyone aside that or who stands in their way. "Under the leadership of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the military has launched airstrikes on villages and internally displaced people's camps and carried out brutal sexual and gender-based attacks on women and girls across the country." (*The World Has Failed to Stand With Myanmar*, By Wai Wai Nu, 1 Feb 2022 in the FP: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/01/myanmar-coup-military-anniversary-rohingya-violence-protests-un-security-council/>)

History also repeats its violence against women and girls. Women stand alongside men to fight for their freedom. They are out on the streets. They motivate others to carry on the resistance. They give trauma support. These are the women whom we have continuously supported, no matter how long the coup takes, we keep on standing with them. Many have already been arrested and are being (sexually) abused and harassed in jail as well as receiving sentences without trial.

The urgency of their work and the urgency for support is not dwindling, but as the coup goes on, it has been more difficult to find more donors to get the work done. We women is a small grassroots organization. At the moment, we are working only on a voluntary basis, as we have no other resources to fall back on. Our network inside Myanmar however perseveres and maintains their resistance. So we keep doing whatever we can to support these brave women in the field.

One woman whom We women has supported was taken by the military in September 2021. Win (not her real name) had been personally demonstrating against the coup since February 2021 and in addition had been lobbying other women to get involved in civil disobedience activities. Win has been integral in organizing help for other activists and has been arranging counseling for those traumatized by recent events. She also played a role in disseminating donations throughout the community for We women. Win has now been captured by the military. These disappearances are designed to instill

fear in these brave women. However, the courage of these women and their determination to not give up on their dream of democracy is strong. So the others carry on, they feel the urgency and the importance of their work and also will keep on fighting for their captured peers and all people who are suppressed by the regime.

From abroad, we continue to send our strong women messages, online meditations and financial support to encourage them and to assist them to calm their minds and to find some solace in the turmoil that they are facing every day.

We are thankful for everyone who has been supporting us the past year and we can't tell you enough how important your continued support is to our women.

*Warm regards,  
Ursula and the We women team*

## Table of content

Introduction	1
<i>Table of content</i>	3
Organisation	4
Program in The Netherlands	5
Program in Myanmar	7
Financial overview	9
Thank you	11

## Organisation

We women runs on volunteers from around the world, with no actual office, we all work from home.

This year we had three volunteers inside Myanmar, two volunteers in Thailand and ten international volunteers.

Our board members keep on standing strong as well: Ursula Cats, who oversees the projects and runs the projects from the Netherlands, Maartje Meens, who does the finances and always assists with writing the annual reports and board members Hayley Rose and Caroline Seagle. Arjan Toorman checks the finances and the financial report at the end of the year.

# Program in The Netherlands

## 1. Meditations online

Since March this year we have set up online weekly meditations for all our women inside Myanmar. The meditation is spread through an app called *signal* which is a relatively safe way of messaging each other throughout Myanmar and with other parts of the world. The women reacted enthusiastically to the messages, as they felt encouraged and remembered by the outside world and at the same time it gave them peace of mind in time of tremendous turmoil. The meditations have been specifically focused on the women inside Myanmar, knowing the high level of stress was causing them a small concentration span, the meditation really talked them through calming exercises and gave space to themes that could be encountered under their traumatic circumstances. The feedback on the meditations have been so positive that we continue sending weekly meditations and are not thinking of stopping or diminishing since they have become essential

*“You can't see or touch stress, but you can feel its effects on your mind and body. In the short term, stress quickens your heart rate and breathing and increases your blood pressure. When you're constantly under stress, your adrenal glands overproduce the hormone cortisol. Overexposure to this hormone can affect the function of your brain, immune system, and other organs. Chronic stress can contribute to headaches, anxiety, depression, heart disease, and even premature death.*

*Though you may not be able to eradicate the roots of stress, you can minimize its effects on your body. One of the easiest and most achievable stress-relieving techniques is meditation, a program in which you focus your attention inward to induce a state of deep relaxation.” (Harvard Health Publishing: What meditation can do for your mind, mood, and health - Harvard Health)*

## 2. Inner Leadership Coaching

Three women from Myanmar received inner leadership coaching on a bi-weekly basis.

*The aims of the Inner Leadership Coaching are:*

- Transforming trauma into power
- Leadership skill development

Knowing their personal stories, getting insight into traumatic events and becoming aware of their role as women makes it possible to strengthen transformation processes, assisting the women into becoming self-confident emerging leaders.

*The end results of the inner leadership coaching:*

The women have gained self-confidence and can work from their strengths.

The women have created a realistic future plan and can actively take part in society.

The women are role models in their communities.

The women contribute towards social change in their communities.

### **3. Fundraising**

Since the Women for Freedom campaign started in March, we have been able to send donations of around €900 twice a month to Thailand. From Thailand it has been distributed in small amounts to people inside Myanmar. Some of the people we have been supporting include Generation-Z activists, high school teachers and other CDM supporters and student activists. People are so thankful for the support they receive since it means that they can pay rent for another month, buy food, and pay for transportation to the places where they can demonstrate. They don't need to be afraid that they are registered somewhere if they get the donation, because we send them to people whom we know in our network and who don't keep records on the ground in Myanmar. Many stories got out of how people who assisted others had lists of names and were caught with these lists and then they also got arrested. It is getting so hard for the people out there to keep on protesting and it is exhausting. Can you imagine being on the streets for three months and fearing for your life and your loved ones lives on a daily basis? As we know that this is so stressful we are also assisting with trauma support and stress release. We are also connecting with other people in ethnic fields who are working on trauma support, to see if we can help out in any way.

# Program in Myanmar

## 1. Women Leadership Network: Emergency Funding

At the beginning of the coup, We women was donating water and food during the first three months of the protests but when this became too dangerous we had to operate clandestinely.

Due to safety concerns and limited possibilities to send money to Myanmar, we are only able to help 20 women per month. We cannot tell any personal stories, as this will endanger the women in the field. Even with fake names, their stories might be too familiar. Therefore, we are very careful with what stories we bring to the outside world. Let me try to give you some overview:

For the past decade, We women offered the most promising women from Myanmar training and academic scholarships with the aim for them to reach positions of leadership in their communities. Our alumni have been involved in the national peace talks, work for national and international NGOs and civil society organizations, and conduct research contributing towards policy writing in a number of fields (healthcare, education, entrepreneurship). Unfortunately, all that work has now been interrupted. Many of the powerful women shifted their focus to fighting against the coup.

After the coup, a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) emerged. Civil servants and other working class individuals refused to continue working for the illegitimate military government or companies belonging to their cronies. Many of them joined the street protests or continued working in the informal sector. After the regime started a very violent and deadly crackdown, the protests have dwindled down and people who joined the CDM are being actively hunted down. Long lists of people that are wanted for arrest are made public and many have gone into hiding. In a country with a huge number of spies, hiding is not easy. Activists are forced to move on a regular basis. Obviously, due to the state of the Myanmar economy and Covid-19 measures, securing a stable income is impossible. We women strives to help as much as we can as a small grassroots organization.

We have built up a network over the years that we can now rely on to ensure that what is needed goes to the right places. The number of beneficiaries changes constantly, because people get arrested, are forced to relocate for safety reasons or just disappear for no apparent reason.



The women that we support throughout this revolution are suffering enormous amounts of stress. Both people in-country and from abroad are in regular contact with a number of women to offer emotional and psychological support.

An immediate concern is that one of our volunteers, Win, has been given a 13-year jail sentence. It is critical that we support Win and all the others like her to let them know that they are not alone in their opposition to the current government. The tactics of the current regime is to demoralize their citizens by torturing and imprisoning them. Women additionally face sexual harassment and rape in jail.

## **2. Awareness Raising and Lobby**

We are trying to raise as much awareness as we can and we did some lobby activities, where we wrote letters to the Dutch government and co-signed many calls for actions to the UN, EU and ASEAN. We also had an online meeting with the ministry of foreign affairs, where we read out a short statement of alumni Pao Hom:

*“I would like that no one leaves Myanmar behind. I would like your government and people from around the world to help us rebuild Myanmar, when we overcome the darkest night! I would like that your government stands with the people in Myanmar and speaks out loud; that we get killed, that we are being abused, that we are treated inhuman. I would like that your government keeps pressure on the military-Tatmadaw, keeps pressure on the UN and if possible our neighboring countries. I understand that Myanmar people must sort out our problem by ourselves. And we are trying very hard to break down the military regime. But your support and pressure are really needed. Without friends around the world, we won't be able to successfully crack down the military and develop our country. We need you, Netherlands! A word and an action from you is important and valuable to us!*”

# Financial overview

## 1. Revenues and expenditures (in Euros)

	2021	2020
<b>Revenu</b>		
Donations monthly private donors	5.800	4.065
Donations fundraising campaigns & events	6.148	1.286
Donations foundations	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.948</b>	<b>5.351</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Program costs	10.200	4.540
Outsourced fundraising	162	78
Telephone & website hosting	276	602
Banking charges	473	301
Other	195	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.306</b>	<b>5.521</b>
<b>Result</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>-170</b>

## 2. Balance

<b>Assets</b>	<b>31-12-2021</b>	<b>31-12-2020</b>	<b>31-12-2019</b>
bank balance	1.044	410	555
paypal balance	0	109	232
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>1.044</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>787</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>31-12-2021</b>	<b>31-12-2020</b>	<b>31-12-2019</b>
Allocated reserves	0	0	0
Continuity reserves	1.044	519	787
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1.044</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>787</b>

## 3. Explanatory notes

In 2021, revenue from fundraising has increased in comparison to the year before. There has been a lot of attention for the emergency assistance and long term and new private donors have been asked to contribute.

With these donations and a reliable way to get the funding inside MMR, We women managed to support the women (and their families) in their stand in the crisis-situation.

A part of the revenue has been put into the continuity reserve, as it is important to be able to ensure a further contribution to the emergency assistance and be able to develop other projects.

## Thank you

Dear women in and from Myanmar, we are tremendously proud of your resistance, your resilience and your ongoing strength. You are all amazing examples for all women around the world. Not giving up hope, as you have always done throughout the years. Under the most severe circumstances you never give up and you don't know how much inspiration that gives to all of us. We keep on fighting with you, we will continue to assist wherever we can and we will not forget you nor give up hope, we will support you in your cause!

Special thanks goes to Num Aye, who kept on fighting until she also really had to flee and be reunited with her husband and son. Num Aye you are a rock in our midst and a very special person!

I also want to thank the volunteers who always keep helping out, year after year: Maartje, Stef, Janice, Marisa, and of course our brave, brave sisters inside Myanmar, who keep the network of We women flowing and who keep assisting the ones even more in need than them.

And of course all our donors, we are lucky to have you on our side, especially, Marianne, Christel, Hanneke, Family van Schijndel, Family Eigeman, Karina, Arda, Jan Toorman.

*Warm regards, Ursula and the We women team*