



Palaung Women's Organization

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Press release

PWO exposes shocking levels of domestic violence in Burma's northern Shan State

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"Voices for Change", a new report released by PWO on Stop Violence against Women Day, claims that 90% of Palaung women are affected by domestic violence. PWO carried out a survey of over 600 people in 4 townships, and found that physical violence is common between married couples and within families.

We couldn't discuss family matters because he got angry very easily and always beat me when we argued. Sometimes he beat me so badly that I had to go to the clinic to get medical help, and he even beat me in front of his parents; nobody can control him. – Palaung female, Namhsan Township.

Domestic violence has a devastating impact on individuals and communities; those affected suffer both physically and psychologically, and often withdraw from community life. Palaung women face acute gender discrimination in all aspects of their lives. Despite this, PWO found that many Palaung see gender inequality and domestic violence as part of their traditional culture and an inevitable part of life.

"Domestic violence and gender discrimination are huge problems for women not only in our area but in all of Burma. Until now nobody has discussed domestic violence, so many people think that violent behaviour is normal, even those who have experienced it themselves". – Lway Moe Kham, lead researcher.

Palaung people have suffered from violence perpetrated by Burma's brutal military regime for more than 5 decades. In the context of Burma's national culture of violence, domestic violence is seen as normal or even acceptable, an attitude which has directly contributed to the high levels of domestic violence found by PWO in the Palaung area. Local people reported that drug and alcohol abuse and the impact of the economic crisis were also fuelling domestic violence in the Palaung area.

PWO is calling upon Burma's military-backed government to end its violent attacks and human rights violations against ethnic peoples, and to ensure that the human rights of rural ethnic women are protected by fulfilling its obligations to CEDAW. PWO is working with local communities to address these problems, but more domestic and international support is needed.

The full report can be viewed at: www.palaungwomen.com and www.Palaungland.org

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