



19 September 2005

I am overwhelmed and honored to receive the Peter Gruber 's Women Rights Prize for 2005 on behalf of the Women's League of Burma (WLB) together with our sister organization, SWAN. We would like to accept the prize for all women who are fighting for human rights and equality in Burma. We are glad that the world has not forgotten women from Burma.

Given the more than 50-year long civil strife and lack of democracy, Burma has been experiencing political turmoil at its worst. Mutual understanding between ethnic nationalities has been torn to shreds. Lives of Burmese people have become a miasma of pain and untold suffering under the military dictatorship.

As I receive the prize today, the situation in Burma has been rapidly deteriorating in every aspect and in every field. There are more than 1,100 political prisoners languishing in inhuman conditions in several prisons inside Burma. Our respected leader of Burma's democracy movement and Nobel Peace Laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest after being physically attacked in May 2003. All political activists face unheard of intimidation, restriction on their movement, detention and torture.

The country's health, education and economic sectors have plummeted to abysmal depths. Thousands of individuals and families have been displaced and have become refugees due to the barbaric human rights violations by the military junta. Under these unsafe circumstances, ethnic women and girls suffer from sex and gender based violence.

As such, the WLB as an umbrella organization and its individual member organizations are trying to work for political and social change in Burma. While fighting against violence against women, we are working for women's empowerment and capacity building for women. We have adopted basic programs for peace and national reconciliation in Burma and are working among refugees and migrant workers at Burma's border areas with Thailand, India, Bangladesh and China.

We are also trying hard to increase women's political participation and women's participation at all levels of decision making in the exile political movement. We aim to use the award money for this program. Moreover, we are trying to break ever so delicately the discrimination based on patriarchy under military rule and also within Burma's democracy and ethnic organizations fighting against the military regime.

In this struggle, it is very important for us to get support, solidarity and cooperation from our friends who are also working for the common cause around the world. We have been encouraged and our strength has been rekindled to continue working on our unfinished task by receiving this award.

I therefore, would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Peter Gruber Foundation and its advisory board members and all the people who nominated and supported us and chose us for the prize.

Thank you very much.

Thin Thin Aung

On behalf of the **Women's of Burma (WLB)**