

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EVALUATION OF SUPPORTING SURVIVORS AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NORTH EASTERN MYANMAR

EVALUATION PURPOSE

In March 2017, IWDA conducted an evaluation of the Ta'ang Women's Organisation (TWO) project. The evaluation's purpose was to identify the partner organisation's current technical strengths and any technical support needs in relation to ending violence against women work. Additionally, this evaluation, together with two other evaluations, aimed to provide insights that will support future program designs for IWDA's Women's Safety and Security Program.

METHODOLOGY

A range of key stakeholders participated (including seven clients), with data being collected through semi-structured individual interviews (29), a survey (5 respondents) and a desk review. The UN *Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence*¹ was chosen to benchmark TWO's services against global recommended service delivery standards. The package provides delivery guidelines (principles, common characteristics, and foundational elements) for the core elements of each essential service to ensure the delivery of high quality services for women and girls experiencing violence, particularly for low and middle-income countries.

KEY FINDINGS

TWO's **area of strength** lies in its strong connection with Ta'ang communities and the integration of its service delivery with its community outreach work aimed at increasing knowledge on women's rights, human rights, and laws, and challenging harmful gender norms.

TWO's model of building up a base of support through engaging women as members, volunteers, interns or staff is an empowering, robust and sustainable way of operating. It also enables women who have experienced violence to reach out for support more easily. TWO also use its libraries as a way of reaching out to women and it has produced a number of reports highlighting the challenges for Ta'ang women. Additionally, TWO has set up Gender Based Violence Prevention Networks, a community based mechanism, to support referrals for survivors of violence and to lead primary prevention activities. This has been effective with networks operating in 10 villages. TWO works consistently to engage men and to challenge men's gendered beliefs and behaviour.

PARTNER AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Ta'ang Women's Organisation (TWO) was founded in 2000 in Thailand by a group of Ta'ang women ex-patriate activists. In 2011, the organisation moved its base to Lashio in Myanmar. TWO now has six branches throughout Myanmar with one branch still being on the border between Thailand and Myanmar. The project 'Supporting survivors and preventing violence against women and girls in North Eastern Myanmar' has been financially supported by IWDA through funding of the Australian Government's ANCP program. Funding provided to TWO was 350,000 AUD over five years (July 2012 until June 2016).

The primary target groups are women and girls from the Ta'ang ethnic group who experience trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence and at times those who have suffered injuries from landmines. Additionally, it involves men through community education activities.

The project goal is to prevent violence against women in Ta'ang communities by ensuring the delivery of high-quality support services and education to survivors of GBV, to strengthen the organisation's presence in the community and its connection with the regional women's movement.

Specific activities are:

- Awareness and advocacy within the Ta'ang community about women's rights
- Engaging with men about women's rights and EAW
- Documentation of human rights violations against women
- Outreach in the community, through volunteer Focal Points.
- Two crisis support services, which offer temporary shelter, basic counselling, and referral to legal services and employment opportunities;
- Accompaniment and case advocacy, including support with mediation in cases involving VAW
- Referral support;
- Education programs for clients to support

¹ [UN Essential Services Package for Women and girls subject to violence: Core elements and quality guidelines](#), United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (the "Programme"), a partnership by UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC

Key challenges identified through the evaluation included the inconsistent application of a “client centred approach” by TWO workers. While TWO has a strong rights focus and attempts to put the client at the centre of its practice, not all TWO workers have the required insight or skills. It appears that women are supported with advocacy on a consistent basis but although some TWO workers have experience in the provision of counselling, there is not a consistent approach to the way that counselling and support for women is provided.

Staff are aware of risk factors but there is no specific risk assessment tool to inform decision making processes. Safe houses do not just serve survivors of violence against women but also other women needing temporary accommodation. This could further jeopardise safety due to the risk of confidentiality breaches.

Children and young women are supported by TWO but child-focused intervention protocols are yet to be developed.

Finally, there are limited linkages with other service providers due to political sensitivities and limited alternative service providers. Knowledge about the availability of TWO safe houses in Lashio and Muse is limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TWO has developed a model that has a broad reach in the communities in which they work, with a distinct focus on educating men and women on gender-based violence and its underlying dynamics and human rights. TWO should maintain their strong connections to the community and continue undertaking prevention work through community education and awareness initiatives. To further strengthen their approach, the following recommendations are made:

- TWO should develop a Practice Manual for their centres to ensure that all staff have a consistent set of procedures to work from. The manual should include the principles that guide TWO’s work and how it can operationalise them in the counselling and support that it provides to survivors.
- The Manual should include protocols for sharing information about TWO’s safe houses and who can access the facilities.
- Follow-up to clients living in the community needs to be prioritised to ensure they are safe from ongoing violence. This would require a more systematic model of service provision including case management with clients being allocated a worker who would provide follow up support and counselling or advocacy as identified in their needs assessment.
- VAW staff and Focal Points need good quality supervision and/or peer supervision and support with case discussions. The Focal Points are not counsellors but do receive some training in how to identify VAW and how to respond to disclosures of VAW. This training should be held regularly to progressively increase the capacity and skills of the volunteers. The practice of self-care should be included in the training.
- Counsellors and Focal Points should be trained in working with children and young people so they can recognise signs of abuse and trauma and provide responses that are child-centred and support recovery.
- TWO should consider running groups for men who use violence to support them to change their behaviours. When supporting clients to engage in ‘mediation’ style processes, TWO should continue to consider how best to ensure the client’s safety.
- TWO should invest in a robust system of data management (in particular case recording). Monitoring and evaluation needs to be undertaken regularly using consistent methods of data collection, with the data analysed to determine whether TWO is working effectively and using this information to improve its services.