

K E S A N

Karen Environmental and Social Action Network

# ACTIVITY REPORT 2008 - 2010

“Rural Livelihood and Environmental Security  
of Karen and Kachin Indigenous Communities”



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## Acknowledgements

This publication summarizes the key initiatives and activities from KESAN's *Rural Livelihood and Environmental Security of Karen and Kachin Indigenous Communities* 2008-2010 program.

KESAN would like to thank and acknowledge our donors for their financial and technical assistance. Their support was instrumental in helping us achieve our goals in improving the rural livelihoods and environmental security of Karen and Kachin indigenous communities.

We would like to thank community-based organizations, NGOs and individuals for sharing their knowledge, perspectives and advice in order to strengthen our organization to better embrace opportunities and face challenges in empowering communities and preserving indigenous knowledge.

Thank you to our KESAN volunteers for their determination and patience in the preparation and finalization of this report.

A special thanks to the KESAN and Kachin Environment Program (KEP) community project partners (CPPs) and strategic project partners (SPPs) for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the implementation of projects and for the hardships and risks they face working to improve the lives of indigenous communities living in and around conflict areas.

Finally, we would like to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to our local communities and local authorities in Karen and Kachin states, for their support, participation and most importantly for sharing their knowledge and experiences. Thank you for your gracious hospitality and for working together with us in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to implement environmental conservation and livelihood security projects for the protection, promotion and long-term sustainability of our lands, our culture and our people.

## List of Acronyms

BRIDGE	Bridging Rural Integrated Development Grassroots Empowerment
CAN	Community Agriculture and Nutrition
CBDI	Community-Based Development Initiatives
CDEF	Community Development Environment Facilitators
CPP	Community Project Partners
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KAD	Karen Agriculture Department
KED	Karen Education Department
KEP	Kachin Environment Program
KFD	Karen Forestry Department
KIO	Kachin Independent Organization
KNU	Karen National Union
KRCEE	Karen Refugee Camp Education Entity
OROL	Our Rivers Our Life
PRCF	People Resources and Conservation Foundation
RDP	Rural Development Priorities
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SPP	Strategic Project Partner
TBBC	Thailand Burma Border Consortium

## Foreword

The people of Karen State have traditionally lived in areas rich in biodiversity, soil fertility, valuable minerals, lush forests and powerful rivers. The natural wealth of the land has been well paired with ethnic traditions, culture and knowledge, which is intimately tied to the surrounding ecological system. In recent years, however, Karen State's natural resource wealth has been intentionally, strategically and increasingly sold off by the ruling regime to the highest bidder. The resulting degradation of the natural environment has reduced biodiversity, funded armed aggression, and increased the pace of impoverishment and landlessness of local people. Climate change exacerbates environmental degradation and reduces the abilities of local communities to deal with its impacts. The scale of displacement and poverty within ethnic communities in Burma, particularly the situation of women, will become much worse if conflict continues and those responsible ignore the environmental and social impacts resulting from displacement, resource expropriation and climate change.

There is an urgent need to work with ethnic communities across Burma to understand and reinforce their inherently sustainable ways of living with nature, and to prevent the further spread of destructive and unsustainable resource extraction. Understanding biodiversity, adaptability and durability are what allow communities and organisations to continue to survive and operate in conflict areas and to adapt to climate change. KESAN believes in the need to creatively engage with local communities, community leaders, women's groups and people who can affect policy and practice change in Burma, to enhance livelihood security and sustainable development policy through the promotion of a rights-based approach. KESAN's work reflects these beliefs.

KESAN operates in a fluid border environment, shaped by Burmese militarism, ethnic national politics, climate change aided environmental degradation and regime and foreign investment driven mega-development projects such as the construction of dams, deep-sea ports and pipelines. In late 2010, after more than 20 years of absolute military rule, the Burmese regime held general elections. However, for most ethnic communities the elections held little promise for true democratic change.



# KESAN Mission, Vision and Values

KESAN is a non-profit organization working alongside local communities in Karen State to ensure sustainable livelihoods by preserving indigenous knowledge, building capacity and promoting practice and policy change. KESAN is committed to:

- supporting community-based livelihood initiatives;
- promoting indigenous knowledge, capabilities and gender equality while enriching livelihoods and biodiversity;
- raising awareness on environment and climate change; and
- advocating for policies that ensure people's participation, ownership, gender equity and environmental sustainability in the development process taking place in the rural areas.

KESAN brings together socio-cultural and environmental considerations to empower local communities to increase their livelihood security by using their own tools and knowledge. KESAN's work is guided by the principles of ownership, participation and women's empowerment, as well as sustainability, cultural-relevance and community benefit sharing.

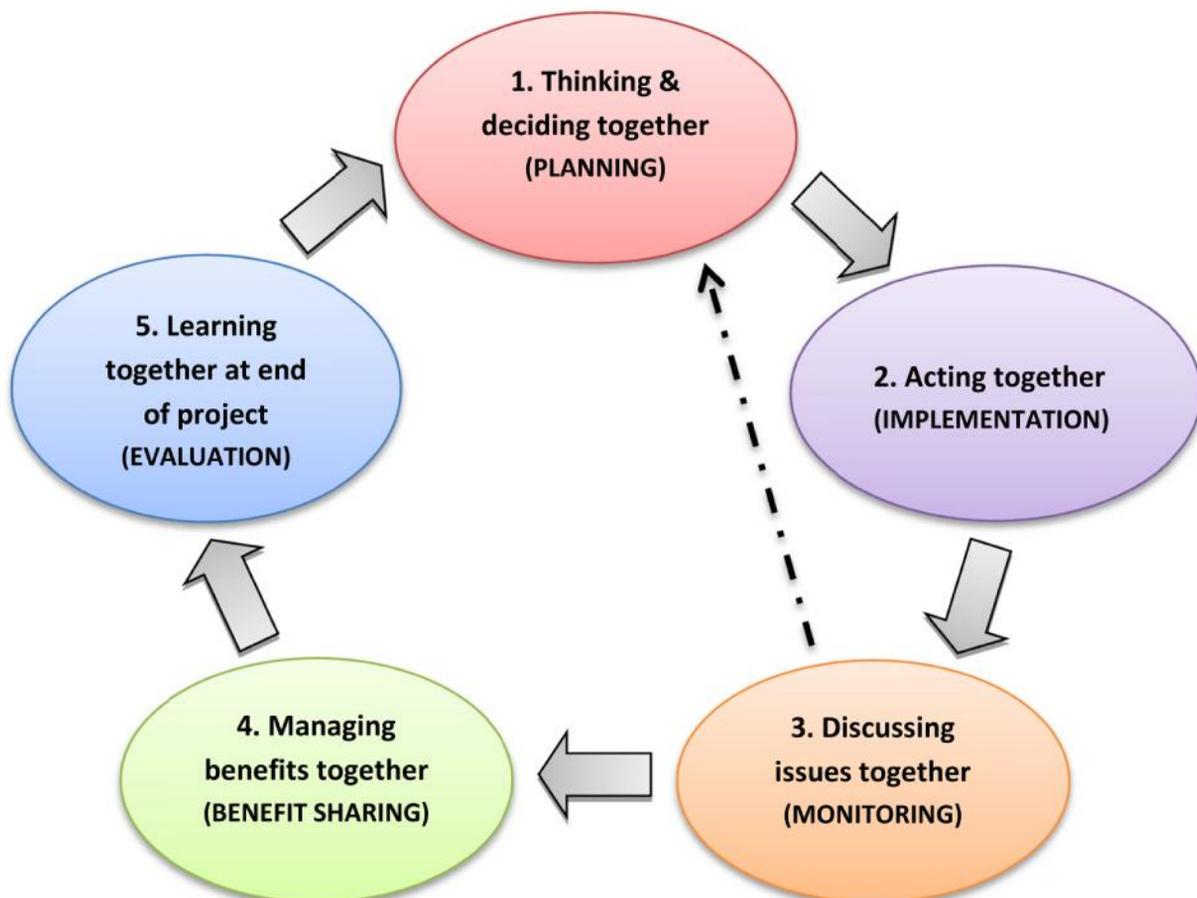
KESAN works with community leaders and local authorities, as well as regional and international decision makers, to ensure that the environmental policies and practices adopted and implemented in Burma and Karen State are environmentally friendly, culturally beneficial, economically viable and socially equitable for both men and women.



# KESAN'S Participatory Project Implementation Process

The focus of KESAN's work is community development and empowerment through a participatory learning process consisting of five stages: (1) thinking and deciding together (planning), (2) acting together (implementation), (3) discussing issues together (monitoring), (4) managing the benefits together (benefit sharing), and (5) learning together at end of project (evaluation). KESAN encourages community members to actively participate in all stages of this process in order to gain self-empowerment whether a project fails or succeeds. KESAN works alongside communities, strategic partners and community-based organizations to develop and implement activities in remote areas, to meet local people's needs and ensure that KESAN's community activities and projects are sustainable and benefit the community as a whole.

## The 5-Stage Participatory Learning Process



## Evaluation Method and Tools

In our 2009 project strategy review, we felt the need for a more rigorous data collection method for project analysis and reporting. As a result, in 2010 we decided to form an evaluation team called the “Community Development Environment Facilitators (CDEFs)”. The purpose of this team is to monitor and evaluate community development projects in the five Districts of Karen State in which KESAN works. The creation of the team was also in-line with the recommendations of an external evaluation by our core donor. The team was given a special training on planning, monitoring, evaluation, Terms of Reference (TORs) and report preparation. A 12-step empowerment evaluation guide for CDEF was also developed. Team members were selected on the basis of the role they have played in KESAN’s work over the years. All members have been through various KESAN trainings and have at least two years of experience in community development work. The team visited community projects twice in 2010 and reported back on their activities to KESAN.

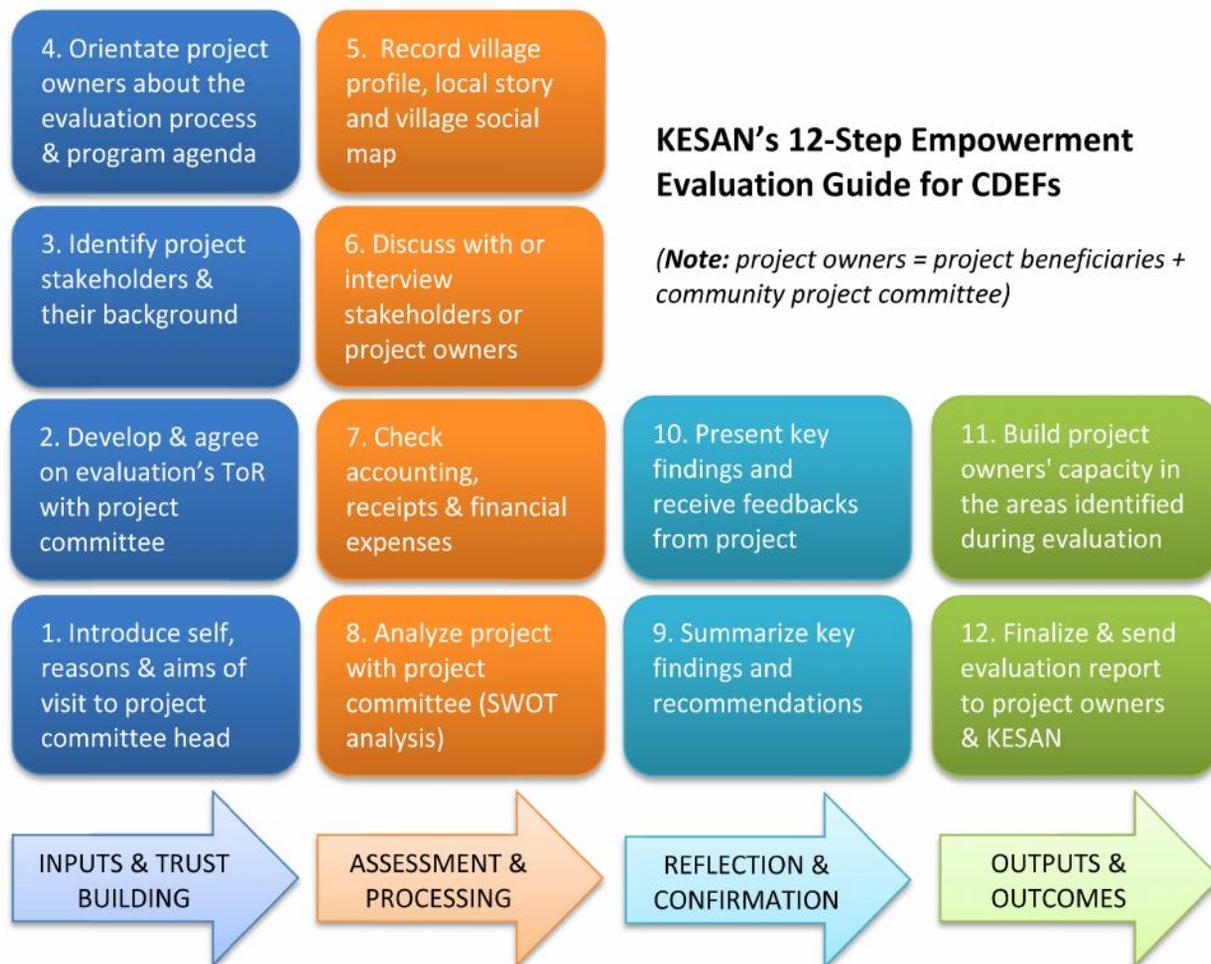
The CDEF helps communities build capacity by showing them how to manage project finances and to write project reports as well as to make sure that each project activity is progressing as planned. In the event of unforeseen circumstances the CDEF assists communities in identifying alternatives and appropriately modifying the project.

To ensure that projects are community driven, participatory and sustainable, the CDEF helps facilitate community member engagement in the five stages of the participatory learning process while monitoring and evaluating the community projects.

To make sure that the findings and recommendations of the CDEFs are accurate and realistic, community project representatives are invited to take part in KESAN’s annual project review meeting where they present their project reports to their peers, CDEFs and KESAN staff. Presentations are followed by comments and questions. Community project partners have already demonstrated an increase in their knowledge, skills and confidence.



CDEF workshop



The CDEF team has a set of nine criteria that they look for when monitoring and evaluating projects.

1. **Relevance**
  - Does the project address a community need?
  - Is the project being implemented based on their proposal (i.e. activities implemented are those that were proposed)?
2. **Efficiency**
  - Are the project finances being efficiently used and managed?
  - Is the project budget realistic?
3. **Effectiveness**
  - Will the project achieve its objectives and/or goals?
4. **Impacts**
  - Is there a measurable positive change resulting from the implementation of the project?
5. **Sustainability**
  - Is the project environmentally friendly, economically viable, socially acceptable and sustainable?



Explaining the 12 - Step Empowerment Evaluation Guide

#### 6. Participatory

- Does the project involve/represent everyone in the community (men, women, youth, elders, rich/poor, Christian/Animist/Buddhist)?

#### 7. Women's Empowerment

- Does the project involve women in all levels of participation and decision-making in project management and implementation?
- Does the project benefit women as well as men?

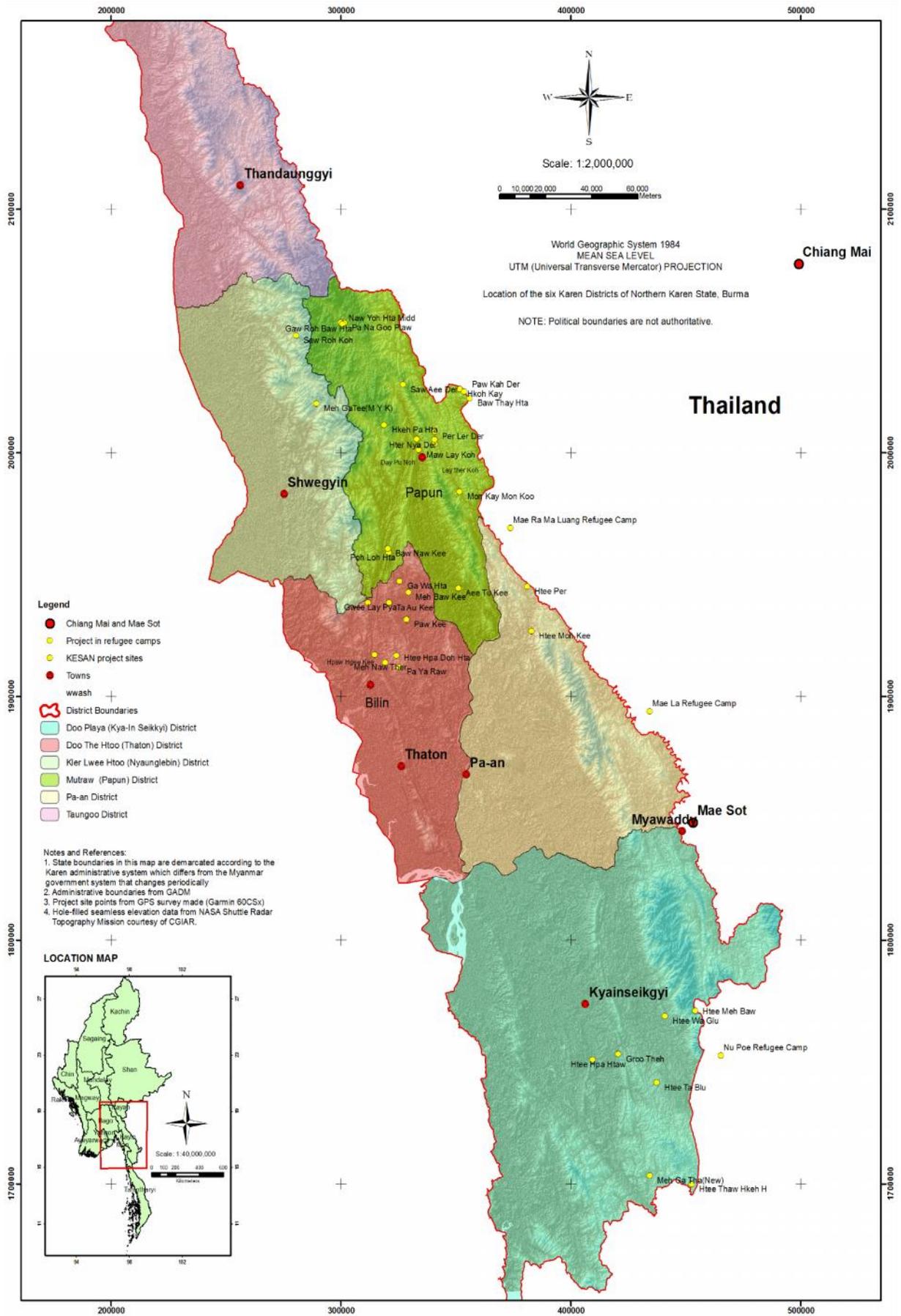
#### 8. Community Organization Development

- Does the project create/strengthen the skills and capacities of the local community?
- Does the project help to create/strengthen community groups and networks for future project development?

#### 9. Climate Change & Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Preparation

- Does the project contribute to community awareness about the impacts of climate change and how it may affect the long-term sustainability of the project?
- Does the project include/incorporate disaster mitigation and adaptation strategies?

As a result, KESAN now has a more reliable and effective monitoring and evaluation process for collecting project data, monitoring and evaluating project progress and outcomes, checking and balancing the use of project funds, and supporting and advising CPPs and SPPs in project implementation.



2008 - 2010 KESAN Project Sites

## 2008 – 2010 Highlights

In 2008 - 2010 KESAN worked directly in 57 villages in Karen and Kachin states. A total of 129,300 individuals (51% women) and at least 361,550 individuals (approx. 52% women) benefited directly and indirectly from KESAN's project interventions. During the project period KESAN was able to support 74 community-based development initiatives that enhanced indigenous knowledge, built capacities, provided income and livelihood sources and increased food security in a sustainable manner. Significant outcomes registered include:

- A community forest network involving 26 villages in Karen State that implements community activities that protect forests and share the benefits of access to forests;
- A traditional herbalist network that shares knowledge with the younger generation on medicinal herbs and their healing properties, as well as teaches youth how to collect, prepare and apply treatments. The network also implements activities to protect herbal medicine forests and gardens.
- A seeds-saving network covering four areas of Karen State. In 2009/2010 a seed surplus of 210 kg was produced and provided to refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. In 2011, we are expecting to provide 1236 kg of seeds to three refugee camps.
- A culturally relevant environmental curriculum including teaching aids that incorporate indigenous Karen culture and knowledge.
- Support in the drafting and adoption of landmark land use and forest management policies that recognize the customary Karen land tenure systems, the rights of communities and individuals to land ownership, and the people's right to manage forests resources for sustainable development.
- Publication of two groundbreaking biodiversity research reports, one on Salween River Biodiversity and the other on Wild Elephants in Megatha Wildlife Sanctuary, which combine indigenous and scientific knowledge.
- Advocacy activities and materials that increase awareness of the adverse impacts of dams, logging, mining, monoculture plantations on the public. As a result, communities are keeping closer watch on those destructive activities.

KESAN and its partners are also breaking down gender stereotypes and are practicing and promoting gender sensitivity, equality and mutual respect in all aspects of its work. A key achievement has been the increasing number of women that have been directly and indirectly benefiting from and effectively participating in KESAN's community development decision-making processes. Today 50% of the beneficiaries of our community-based development initiatives are women.

## Introduction

For the period of 2008-2010, against the backdrop of a complex and difficult security context, KESAN initiated a project entitled: “Rural Livelihood and Environmental Security of Karen and Kachin Indigenous Communities”. The purpose of this project was to contribute to improved rural livelihood security and increased recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights to use and manage their natural resources for sustainable development.

**To achieve this, KESAN developed 5 inter-linking strategies:**

1. Community-Based Development Initiatives, to enable the learning process for communities to help themselves;
2. Capacity Building, as a cornerstone for people empowerment;
3. Environmental Education and Media, to develop educational curriculum and materials and outreach to wide sectors of Karen and Kachin societies;
4. Environment Policies and Rural Development Priorities, to enable an effective policy environment in both pre and post-transition periods; and
5. Networking, Campaigning and Advocacy, to mobilize decision makers and communities to stop destructive mega-development projects

This report summarizes activity results achieved within the framework of these strategies from 2008-2010 in both Karen and Kachin states of Burma. The Kachin Environment Project (KEP) was a special project implemented in partnership with the Pan-Kachin Development Society Environment Team which is now an independent organization called “Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroots Empowerment (BRIDGE)”. The KEP applied the same framework and approach of KESAN’s which also achieved significant results.

The case studies in this report highlight the outcomes and linkages of each project activity. Selected publications of KESAN have been listed in this report. These publications are available upon request or can be downloaded on our website for sharing with other like-minded organizations or individuals.

Despite significant outcomes achieved during the three years of project implementation, this activity report also identifies major gaps and challenges which need to be addressed in the next 3-5 years. KESAN and its partners still need more technical skills, human and financial resources in order to meet the growing needs and concerns of communities in the context of a changing Burma.

In the context of global climate change, KESAN’s 2011-2013 program “Building Self-Sufficient and Disaster Resilient Rural Karen Communities”, plans to focus and formalize climate-change research and adaptation into our community-based development initiatives.

## Community Based Development Initiatives

Community based development initiatives (CBDI) are at the centre of KESAN's work. A healthy natural environment is interrelated and interdependent while ensuring food security and community focused sustainable development. To ensure the protection of forests and conservation of finite natural resources, policy promotion and information dissemination activities have been undertaken over the years to raise local communities' awareness of ecological and environmental management. CBDI enable resource persons and community elders to transfer knowledge and technical skills required for sustainable development in livelihoods and resource management to other community members including young people and children.

KESAN's CBDI focuses on six major theme areas: Forest Resource Management, Food Security, Traditional Medicine and Healing, Environmental Awareness and Campaigns, Biodiversity Research and Community Capacity Building. We provide guidance, small project funding, monitoring, troubleshooting services, advocacy support and evaluation to ensure project success.

Over the years, KESAN has worked with communities and local authorities to implement forest resource management initiatives. Activities have included the establishment and protection of community forests and resources - especially flora, which are used as both food and sources of traditional herbal medicine by Karen people. Community forests are an important tool for biodiversity conservation and sustainable community-driven development. In Karen communities, a community forest is managed by a committee, composed of local community members, that manages the forest for the benefit of the entire community.

Community forests incorporate environmental, social and economic considerations and focus on local control over local forest resources. Significant benefits from the establishment of community forests includes greater mobilization and empowerment of local communities to become stewards of their forests; reduced illegal logging and wildlife hunting activities; increased biodiversity and forest health; and less conflict over and greater access to non-timber forest products such as honey, wild fruits and vegetables, mushrooms and river fish stocks.

In addition to the establishment of community forests, participatory Land-Use-Classification dialogue and 3-D Map-Making activities have been carried out in partnership with Karen local authorities to demarcate village boundaries and land-uses. The map-making process and resulting physical 3-D model serve as an important tool for the identification of villages, rivers, forests and other topographic features. The 3-D model map is a common resource that can be used for negotiating and managing village boundaries and mediating natural resource management disputes/issues.

Traditional medicine and healing initiatives are another area of KESAN's CBDI activities. Access to western medicines and health professionals is for the most part unavailable to rural communities in Karen State, and as a result people are desperately looking for viable alternatives. For many

generations, the Karen traditional healing practices have been instrumental in providing health services and medical care to local communities and internally displaced people. Traditional Karen herbal medicine and treatment has survived and continues to be practiced as the elder generation of herbalists are teaching youth and interested members of Karen society in the ways of Karen traditional medicine. To support the transfer and exchange of knowledge, KESAN has organized trainings for community members interested in learning about Karen herbal medicine and treatments.

These activities are especially appropriate as they help preserve indigenous knowledge while also addressing the barriers people face in assessing health care in remote locations where there are ongoing security issues, the cost of medicines is prohibitive and adequate health care services are lacking. The training of herbalists has meant that there is now significantly greater local knowledge and capacity in the identification, harvesting, processing and proper storing of herbal medicines, as well as knowledge on the appropriate treatment of specific kinds of maladies and injuries.

Displacement, resource expropriation and climate change jeopardizes communities' livelihoods. KESAN's food security initiatives aim to build the capacity of local communities to reduce their vulnerabilities to disasters and to maintain and/or restore the ecological balance in their surrounding areas. Food security initiatives are primarily undertaken and overseen by the community themselves, which helps them to become self-reliant and prepared for climate change variability due to the accelerating effects of global warming. These initiatives include the establishment of household seed banks, organic gardens, animal husbandry, agro-forestry (fruit tree plantations) and small



Community forest training, Doo The Htoo District, 2010

infrastructure projects. Knowledge and awareness of the participants on the importance of ecologically-friendly yet economically viable practices in farming have been enhanced. Over the years, these activities not only significantly reduced production costs, but at the same time, also produced safe and healthy food for communities, thereby increasing the diversity and quantity of food produced and increasing overall food security.

Other key food security activities implemented by KESAN have been seed-saving projects. Using traditional Karen seed-saving techniques this activity ensures the availability and accessibility of local seeds for the next cropping season and enhances the communities' resiliency and capacity to cope with natural disasters and/or forced relocation and displacement due to military hostility. Local seed varieties that were saved and stored through KESAN's seed-saving trainings and the formation of seed-saving networks resulted in some of the surplus seeds being sold to the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) for distribution in the refugee camps, increasing the food security and nutrition of those in the camps in a time where relief agencies are forced by budget cuts to reduce supplies to refugees. It is worth noting that the overall aim of the seed-saving network is to ensure the livelihoods of participating communities. Thus, KESAN will continue to monitor this activity very closely to ensure that the sale of seeds does not jeopardize communities' self-reliance.

Recognizing the importance of promoting and preserving indigenous knowledge to maintaining traditional Karen culture and identity and the health of the environment, KESAN added the indigenous knowledge preservation component to its CBDI program in 2009. Activities have focused on supporting a particular group of communities living in Mutraw District. For many generations, these animist communities have maintained their livelihoods in harmony with the forests, which is why healthy diversity-rich forests can be found in these areas today. These communities possess rich indigenous knowledge and culture but are on the brink of cultural extinction due



Young people trained by local expert herbalists making medicines from traditional plants, Doo Playa, 2010



KESAN works with communities and internally displaced people to develop seed-saving networks that preserve and distribute traditional seeds.



Elders sharing their knowledge on making and playing traditional Karen musical instruments.

to more than 60 years of civil war. Thus, KESAN has been supporting traditional Karen musical training and poetry writing and reciting, as well as a cotton-weaving project which serves both as a form of vocational training and a source of income generation.

Throughout the years KESAN, with the support of local partners has conducted environmental awareness activities and community-based capacity building trainings. Environmental awareness activities have included environmental film showings; tree planting events; and the composing of folk songs related to the intimate relationship between Karen people and their environment and the beauty of nature. Trainings have also been organized to support community-based development initiatives, such as forest resource management and food security. Trainings build capacity, raise awareness, provide new skills and empower local communities to advocate for the sustainable management of their environment.

### Program highlights:

- 1521 households reached by KESAN activities between 2008 and 2010
- 43 community forests established
- One weaving and one stove-making project specifically geared towards building capacity and generating income for women
- Nine community traditional herbal clinics
- Nine demonstration organic gardens
- Seven irrigation systems
- Small-scale livestock and fish-raising projects Duck, pig, goat, chickens and fish raising projects.

### Case-study : Saw Roh Koh and Lo Kee Community Forest

Saw Roh Koh and Lo Kee Community Forest (in Kler Lwee Htoo District) was established in 2004. Previous to the establishment of the community forest, significant wildlife hunting and trading was took place in the area. In 2008-2009, two villages in the area (Saw Roh Koh and Lo Kee) along with CPPs and SPPs became concerned about the poaching and trade of wildlife in their community forest and decided to conduct research to investigate the nature and extent of these activities. The research also aimed to identify threats to the survival of rare, endangered and prohibited wildlife species (such as elephants, tigers, gibbons, langurs, and gaurs). A draft of the research report was produced in 2010 and results suggest that there are healthy populations of wildlife in the community forest and that there is a significant decrease in the reported cases of wildlife poaching and trading. These results strongly suggest that the establishment of the community forest along with the enforcement of rules, regulations and accompanying education awareness campaigns have been successful in reducing wildlife poaching and trading and maintaining biodiversity in the forest.

One of the remaining intact forest areas in Kler Lwe Htoo District, Karen State, which is part of Nat Taung Range . Saw Roh Koh and Lo Kee community forest is also part of this mountain range.



*“Lose our forests and we lose ourselves.  
As the forests are torn from the earth  
so too is the spirit of the Karen”*

- KESAN forest campaign’s slogan -

## Capacity Building Program

Capacity building and development of staff, local communities and CBOs is key to enable activities for environmental protection and social development and to strengthen, support and connect all of KESAN's programs. KESAN provides members of the community with technical skills, organizational development and community organizing training. It then recruits its CPPs from this pool of individuals. CPPs play a crucial role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of KESAN activities, as well as assessing needs with the communities and providing trouble-shooting solutions. KESAN's Annual Seminar is a key event in the year bringing together all those involved in the implementation of community-based initiatives and environmental protection projects. This meeting provides capacity building opportunities to improve evaluation, exchange, networking and mentoring, as well as a forum for discussing and developing new ideas and sharing and learning from experiences.

Capacity building activities have included project management, participatory methodologies including Participatory Rural Appraisal Tools, forest management, disaster mitigation, media and journalism. By developing the skills and expertise of staff, local communities and CBOs the effectiveness of all programs and activities is enhanced. Thus, the knowledge gained from capacity building activities is shared and communicated well beyond the initial pool of individuals.

Over the years, KESAN has organized meetings and training activities with Karen authorities and communities to strengthen their capacity and develop policies on natural resource management, as well as to mobilize community protection and conservation practices. This has led to the development of a greater understanding of sustainable forest management by senior Karen leaders as well as the need to involve and work closely with local communities in preserving and maintaining forests and traditional lands for the long-term benefit and sustainability of all Karen people.



Awareness raising training on environmental conservation in Kler Lwee Htoo, where wildlife trade is increasing. KESAN organises trainings with the community to promote understanding on the need to preserve wildlife conservation.

Capacity building activities have also been essential in increasing women's involvement in protection and conservation practices. In Karen society women are the primary users of the forest – for both practical and strategic needs and for the household and community. However, forest and natural resource management have long been male-dominated. KESAN staff facilitating trainings has (in line with our Gender Policy) advocated for women to be given greater access and

opportunity to participate in all levels of decision-making. As a result, local authorities have begun to benefit from women's participation in forest and natural resource management. Women's participation in training and activities has been increasing steadily over the years. Today 50% of the direct beneficiaries of all community based activities are women.

Study tours and exposure trips provide important opportunities for participants to exchange knowledge and ideas in a practical environment. As such,

KESAN continues to organize study trips in Thailand and overseas, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge between participants on sustainable management and community-development best practices; and to explore ways to apply and adapt techniques to their own specific context. Study trips have been organized to countries such as the Philippines, to learn about the farmers' movement and sustainable agriculture techniques and to China to learn about tea cultivation. Study trips have also been organized in Thailand to promote learning and exchange of knowledge between Thai-Karen communities, such as agroforestry techniques that could be used and adapted by Karen communities in Karen State, or to promote exchanges between the Karen diaspora and youth living along the Thai-Burma border.

KESAN has also been involved in the training of indigenous activists and community development workers on environmental issues. Over the past 10 years, KESAN's strong environmental knowledge and expertise has meant that we have been able to network with local and regional stakeholders to build its reputation as a knowledgeable and reliable source of information and research on local and regional environmental issues. As such, KESAN has been invited to provide introductory and intermediate environmental trainings and workshops to many Burmese and other ethnic partner organizations.



KESAN's Annual Seminar is the key event in the year bringing together all those involved in the implementation of community based initiatives and environmental protection projects.

### Program highlights:

- Eight trainings organised for CPPs and SPPs
- 50 CPPs received training
- 52 SPPs received training
- 50% of direct beneficiaries of all community-based activities are women.
- Study trips to the Philippines, China and Thailand to promote learning and exchange knowledge on agro- forestry techniques



Young women learning both handcraft and agriculture techniques from their community leaders

## Case study: 3-D Community mapping project in Maw Lay Ko village, Mutraw district, KarenState, Burma

Saw Klaw Po is the head of Maw Lay Ko village in Mutraw District. He is a charismatic, enthusiastic man who is well-respected in his community. For many years, the villagers of Maw Lay Ko had been having trouble with outsiders from surrounding areas crossing into their village area and using the forest without their permission for logging, hunting and forest resource gathering.



Conflict between Maw Lay Ko and neighboring villages arises annually over land used for upland shifting cultivation and wild cardamom harvesting. The younger generation of villagers do not have a clear sense of old village boundaries, as families sometimes disagree on what Elders in the community had previously stated about household and village demarcations. As well, villagers that move outside of the original village boundaries for shifting cultivation purposes also have problems demarcating and delineating new village, forest and watershed boundaries and sometimes come into conflict with other villages. Every year Saw Klaw Po has to mediate in order to resolve the problem.

Maw Lay Ko community has always wanted to develop a community forest and establish boundaries and rules and regulations for the sustainable management of their forest but they have lacked the knowledge and skills to do so. After hearing from a CPP that KESAN had the knowledge to help his community, Saw Klaw Po asked KESAN to help his community create a map and establish a legal basis for land tenure and the legitimate jurisdiction of their forests.

KESAN staff that had received a 3-D community-map making training travelled to Maw Lay Ko village and helped the community to create a 3-D map of their village and surrounding forests. Participants from the surrounding 8 villages also attended the workshop to negotiate and delineate the boundaries of the Maw Lay Ko community forest and watershed area. The delineation and mapping process was completed communally and with everyone's input. It was a lengthy and lively process but in the end, a 3-D map of the village and surrounding area was created and displayed in the village so that everyone would be able to see for themselves

what the boundaries of the village, watershed and community forest looked like.

Saw Klaw Po and the rest of the villagers are happy to finally have a community map of their area – and they can now use this to develop and establish their own community forest and rules and regulations. Saw Klaw Po, usually quite a talkative man was overjoyed stating that:

*"..every year I have to talk a lot and explain to the communities about respecting forest boundaries and rules, but now that we have the map, the map talks for me so I can talk less!"*

The 3-D model map is a common resource that can be used to negotiate and manage village boundaries and natural resource disputes/issues in and around Maw Lay Ko village by current and future generations. In fact, the workshop was such a success that participants from the other surrounding villages all wanted to make 3-D maps for their own areas!

Building KESAN staff capacity is essential to aiding local communities. Without KESAN staff knowledge and expertise, Saw Klaw Po's dream of creating a map to discuss community forest management issues in a co-operative and interactive way might not have been possible. Due to the amazing response and request for this type of activity, we are planning to train our CPPs in community 3-D map making.



## Environmental Education and Media

To increase children's, youth's, communities' and leaders' participation and engagement in environmental protection it is essential to raise awareness about environmental issues. KESAN is involved in developing environmental education materials tailored to indigenous learning systems to increase communities' awareness and participation in environmental protection and conservation. Activities have involved the development of environmental education curriculum materials for use in Karen formal schools, and the research and publication of information on environmental issues for dissemination to communities and leaders in order to educate and influence decision-makers.

KESAN has developed environmental curriculum and teaching aids for Karen refugees and Internally Displaced People. KESAN's environmental curriculum and teaching aids are used in Karen refugee camps in Thailand and schools in Karen state. In addition to developing environmental curricula and teaching aids, KESAN has also trained teachers in the use of this curriculum. This curriculum uses teaching aids that incorporate and highlight the relevance of indigenous culture and knowledge. Furthermore, in partnership with the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE), the Karen Education Department (KED) and ZOA Refugee Care, Thailand, KESAN has revised the Grade 3-7 curriculum on Social Studies and has now also developed a Social Studies curriculum for Grades 1-2. Due to the positive feedback from students, parents, teachers and community leaders the KED has decided to extend the curriculum beyond primary level to the high school level.

Awareness raising activities have also been supported through the production of a variety of publications and the implementation of research on various environmental issues. Over the years KESAN has published the "Thulei Kawwei" magazine and cartoon booklets for children on food security, deforestation and biodiversity as well as on forests, rivers, water and local sustainable farming techniques. KESAN has also produced a seed saving and food security report along with a number of guides, on subjects including good environmental governance practices; environmental

training; participatory food security research and project management.



KESAN had developed environmental education curriculum and teaching aids for Karen refugees and internally displaced people.

In 2010, as part of KESAN's wildlife protection activities, the report "Endangered Elephants in Mehgatha Forest, Doo Pla Ya District, Kare State, Burma" was finalized. The report details over 60 species of wildlife found in the forest, nine of which are listed as Endangered, seven as Vulnerable and six as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red

List. An immediate result of the research and subsequent report, along with support and pressure from local communities was that in August of 2010, the Doo Pla Ya Forestry Department officially banned logging in the Megatha Forest to help preserve its wild elephant habitat.

In addition to these activities, a selected set of environmental documentary films have been distributed along the Thai-Burma Border and inside

Burma to various partners, key individuals, civil society groups, schools, monasteries and nunneries. Under the isolationist military regime access to this type of information is difficult to get inside Burma. By distributing informative, engaging and motivational material to a wide variety of stakeholders and partners, it is anticipated that local communities and organizations will become more educated, aware and motivated about various local, regional and international environmental and sustainable development issues.

KESAN believes that these publications have had a significant impact on the general public in Karen State and refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border. Communities are more aware of the destructive mega-projects and their impacts. Some local leaders have changed their behavior and have strongly spoken out against inappropriate natural resources exploitation in Karen State. These materials help to raise the profile of environmental problems in Karen State amongst local communities, local leaders and exiled media. They also serve to promote and preserve Karen culture, language and traditional practices and are important advocacy tools for Karen communities.



Distribution of the KESAN handbook on traditional agricultural practices. KESAN compiles information about traditional practices to preserve culture and promote traditional knowledge.

### Program highlights:

- Curriculum and teaching aids were used in 177 schools (101 in Karen State, 64 in seven Karen refugee camps in Thailand and, using a different curriculum, in 12 schools in Kachin State).
- 575 teachers (63% females) were trained in the use of the environmental curriculum.
- KESAN staff trained over 400 members of Burmese community based organisations, including monks, nuns, teachers, hospital staff and journalists.
- KESAN's environment training and educational materials have been distributed at training institutes and Universities.
- The Doo Pla Ya Forestry department officially banned logging in the Megatha Forest as a result of the 'Endangered Elephants' report and subsequent community pressure on the authorities



The environmental education curriculum has been taught in many schools both inside Karen State and in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border

## Case-study : Translation of theory into practice

A vital part of the Environmental Education program is the translation of theory into practice. Over the years, teachers have replaced flipcharts with re-usable rice-bags. Teachers explain the difference between various plants and trees using gardens planted on school grounds. An activity that has been very successful is making students environmentally responsible is asking them to help keep the school grounds proper and clean. In order to do this teachers separate students into small groups and delegate responsibilities for preserving and enhancing the local environment. Each group has to clean the classroom, grounds and toilets on a rotational basis. At the secondary level, students are asked to come up with their own ideas about the best way to preserve the school grounds and surrounding environment. Good practice is encouraged by rewarding groups and/or individual students with extra academic credits. In addition students are asked to interview the Elders within their community. This provides students with an opportunity to interact with a different generation and allows them to learn myriad things about contemporary, and in particular indigenous knowledge. In some schools in Karen State, students apply knowledge gained through interviews with Elders to produce herbal medicines and practice weaving.

Students have said that they really enjoy the practical sessions in their environmental education classes and teachers have noticed that they don't have to tell their students to keep the school compound clean. It has now become part of the student's daily routine. And perhaps most importantly, the Elders in the community have been feeling more acknowledged and valued due to their active participation in the program and the inclusion of their indigenous knowledge in environmental education.

Parents have also noted that they don't have to teach their children as much about the importance of preserving the environment because they've already been taught it in school. Over the years parents have also become more involved in the work of the schools. Parents and teachers associations (PTA) have been set-up to harmonize parent-teachers cooperation, as well as to promote parents' involvement in their children education and school activities. PTAs meet once every three months to discuss various issues and to organize activities, such as fundraisings and building schools.



Logging and mining activities threaten the Megatha Wildlife Sanctuary, Doo Pla Ya District

## Case-study : From Hunter to Forest Guardian, Megatha Wildlife Sanctuary

In 2008 KESAN began their wildlife research in Megatha Forest. The KNU referred us to Saw Cher Po as a valuable guide and source of local knowledge. Saw Cher Po is a hunter from Yaw Kaw Daw village who has spent over 30 years living in Megatha Forest. Nobody knew the forest as intimately as Saw Cher Po as his livelihood depended on him knowing how to hunt many kinds of wildlife (tigers, langur, gibbons, etc). Saw Cher Po's vast knowledge of the forest and his excellent tracking and hunting skills make him invaluable to many people as well as the KNU who had previously asked him to work for them. But Saw Cher Po, preferring his independence, declined the offer as he never wanted to work for an organization.



The purpose of this research project was to conduct field work and primary research using indigenous knowledge and scientific methods to determine the conservation status of the wild elephant population in the lush and relatively undisturbed Megatha Forest.

### Saw Cher Po stated:

*"I have lived in the forest more than 30 years as a hunter. Although many people asked for my help or my knowledge, I never wanted to be associated with an organization and nobody ever asked me to be part of anything .."*

*"But in 2008 when I met KESAN and they invited me to become a part of their research committee I started to learn about the importance of wildlife protection and conservation and I started to change my mind about hunting and my previous ways of doing things. I wanted to work together with KESAN to protect the forest and wildlife."*

*"Now when I see people logging and mining, I feel sad whereas before I didn't really think about the impacts of these activities. Now I try to talk to people and explain to them the importance of preserving and protecting Megatha"*

In 2010, the dissemination of the research results, along with support and pressure from local communities caused the Doo Pla Ya Forestry Department to officially ban logging in Megatha Forest to help preserve its wild elephant habitat.

Saw Cher Po still lives in the forest but instead of being a full-time hunter as he once was, he is now a guardian and protector of the forest. Saw Cher Po is part of a committee of local researchers and serves as a guide for those wanting to learn more about the elephants and other wildlife of Megatha Forest.

## Environment Policies Program

Over the years, KESAN has worked with community leaders and local authorities to ensure that the policies, practices and development priorities adopted and implemented within Karen communities are environmentally friendly, culturally beneficial, economically viable and socially equitable for both men and women. Emphasis has been put on setting up participatory processes and mechanisms to ensure that rural people have an understanding of how to engage in the policy development process and can actively participate in an informed and collaborative manner.

In the past, policy development and implementation followed more of a top-down approach. Local villagers were sometimes not aware of the policies and regulations of the Karen local authorities. As a result, during consultations and meetings villagers were unable to participate effectively or voice their concerns and complaints because they didn't have adequate information and knowledge on the issues. KESAN and its partners have been facilitating discussions and providing necessary information for villagers to make informed contributions and decisions on forestry-related issues. Through these activities villagers and local leaders have felt more empowered and gained confidence to voice their concerns as well as to assert their rights.

In 2008, Karen Forestry Department introduced a new forest policy to enforce sustainable forest policy implementation. Community forest instructions and rotational farming rules and regulations



KESAN works with and provides training to local authorities on policy development and implementation, as well as to advocate for legal frameworks based on participatory processes and mechanisms.

were introduced in 2010. KESAN's legal and community based research provided significant input into the drafting of the revised policy and the community forest instructions and rotational farming rules. KESAN staff also participated in the workshop organized by the Karen authorities prior to the revision of the policy. The revised forest policy encourages local communities to be active stewards of their forests and facilitates the decentralization of forest management to the community level in large tracts of forest. The revised forest law will also serve as a practical guide to the Karen local authorities for sustainable community-based forest management. A key revision in the forest policy is the conscious inclusion of women's participation at the management level in the central office. KESAN is also supporting the review of the KNU Forestry Act, which needs to be changed in order to be in line with the new forest policy and which decentralizes forest management to local people.

In 2010, the Karen Forestry Department conducted a Forest Policy Awareness outreach program in six of the seven districts in Karen State to empower local communities to establish community forests based on the adopted forest policy and guideline, and to help build understanding and collaboration between communities and leaders. KESAN's community project partners (CPPs) served as trainers and worked closely together with the district forestry department in the dissemination of the policy, rules and regulations on rotational farming and basic education on sustainable environmental management. The right to own and manage community forest was emphasized in the outreach activity. Although significant gains have been made in forest policy management and the banning of logging, illegal logging still continues in many different parts of Karen State. KESAN continues investigations to substantiate allegations of illegal logging and will take appropriate advocacy and awareness raising measures to help stop illegal logging.

KESAN continues to provide expertise on the development of Karen Agriculture Department land policy and on good environmental governance. District and central leaders continue to gain greater knowledge and understanding of the importance of good environmental governance and best practice. This has led to a better understanding of the benefits of working closely with communities on policy development, implementation and enforcement; and the development of a better relationship with communities as local authorities have begun to use participatory approaches towards community development and sustainable resource management.

### **Program highlights:**

- Positive changes in the attitude and behavior of local leaders have led to a better understanding of the co-management of forests with local people and the importance of both women's and men's participation in natural resource management;
- Promotion and support for the development of new policies such as forest and land that ensure sustainable management of resources;
- Increased participation of women at the management level of resource management.

## Networking, Campaigning and Advocacy

The overall aim of KESAN's networking, campaigning and advocacy work is to strengthen local, regional and international campaigns and networks on rivers, indigenous knowledge and biodiversity conservation to ensure people's participation, ownership, gender equity and environmental sustainability in the development process. To reach this aim, KESAN works with a number of issue-based networks, such as the Burma Environmental Working Group, Karen Rivers Watch and "Our Rivers, Our Life" (OROL) campaign. Over the years, KESAN's advocacy activities have focused on river biodiversity protection; promotion of good governance, transparency and accountability in the implementation of mega-development projects; and wildlife research, biodiversity conservation and indigenous land rights. In addition to regional and international campaigning and networking building, KESAN also works with Karen local leaders and decision makers on environmental protection and sustainable development to ensure that these principles are mainstreamed into policies. Through its networking, campaigning and advocacy activities KESAN strongly encourages and promotes the recognition of community concerns and the vital role that local communities play in protecting and conserving the environment.

Over the years, KESAN has developed links with Thai and Burmese civil society organizations and the media. Activities and campaigns have been organized together in order to multiply the impacts of KESAN's advocacy work. This has involved activities on Environment Day and International Day of Action for Rivers; demonstrations and field trips; and attendance at international meetings, such as "Rivers for Life 3" in Mexico and the UN Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. KESAN continues to provide resources to a number of organizations to strengthen networks and promote advocacy within Thailand and Burma.

Over the past 10 years, KESAN has contributed to a campaign led by the Thai civil society organizations Salween Watch and the Burma Rivers Network, that calls on decision-makers to demand good governance, transparency and accountability in the process of building the Hutgyi Dam (located on the Thai-Burma border along the Salween River). Due to the resulting outcry from affected communities and relevant stakeholders, a campaign milestone was achieved when the Thai government ordered a new comprehensive project assessment to be conducted.

In 2010, KESAN continued to play a convening role in the regionally focused OROL campaign, which empowers participating organisations in seven member countries in the South-East Asia region to encourage children and youth to take an active role in the protection of their river ecosystems for future generations. Part of the OROL campaign's objective is to promote "ecological child rights in the region."



Each year, on the International Day of Action for Rivers (March 14th), KESAN and Karen Rivers Watch mobilize people from Ee Tu Hta refugee camp (in Karen State), IDPs and other surrounding Karen villagers to participate in awareness raising events and activities. The events are organized in conjunction with the Thai organization, Living Rivers Siam. Stakeholders from other ethnic groups and Thai organizations also participate in solidarity with the Karen people. News articles and stories from the event were published in the Thai PBS television program “Citizen’s Report” and were posted on a local Karen website(<http://www.kwekalu.net>).

In 2010, KESAN and Karen Rivers Watch also conducted a fact-finding trip to learn about and document the negative impacts of Shwegyin dam (in Kler Lwee Htoo District) on communities and the environment. The short film produced from evidence collected from the fact-finding trip clearly tells the world about the harmful effects of such a large-scale development project undertaken by the repressive Burmese military regime. The film has been very useful as a tool for local advocacy to illustrate the true impacts of dam-building to communities that have not seen it before.

An essential part of KESAN’s advocacy work has also been the publication of research on biodiversity. KESAN is the first ethnic environment group on the border to conduct scientific biodiversity research and to shed light on the status of biodiversity in areas of Karen State inaccessible to the international scientific community. By linking scientific and traditional indigenous knowledge to study biodiversity, KESAN’s wildlife research program has been able to gather valuable information on both international and traditional Prohibited Species List (i.e. list of animals that are prohibited to hunt, trade, eat or kill) working independently as well as in collaboration with international organizations for wildlife protection. Over the last 3 years, the program has published reports (please see the publication section at the end of the report) and short video documentaries on the richness of wildlife and the significant role that the Karen people have played in maintaining and preserving this biodiversity, even in wartime.

Following the release of KESAN’s report entitled “Kho Kay: Biodiversity in Peril” in 2008, KESAN gained international standing, and as a result in early 2009, KESAN developed partnerships with World Wildlife Fund and PRCF to jointly conduct research on endangered fauna. The goal of this research was to establish their status and to promote the value of saving special species. KESAN has prioritized these collaborative advocacy and conservation activities which have resulted in community and staff capacity building on scientific research methodologies and have raised our profile for advocacy both regionally and internationally, as well as for fundraising purposes.

### **Program highlights:**

- Mobilization of people in monitoring mega development project such as large dams in Karen State
- Production of advocacy materials such as ‘Kho Kay: biodiversity in Peril’ report and other short films
- Resources provision to successful advocacy campaigns in Thailand and Burma.



A rights-based approach to community forest development and management increases women's access to non-timber forest products in Kachin Environment Project areas, Kachin State



As a result of KEP's campaign on the negative effects of agricultural chemicals on people's health, Kachin decision makers have issued strict measures to regulate sugar cane plantations in Mai Ja Yang, Kachin State

## The Kachin Environment Project

KESAN works with other indigenous organizations and communities to promote capacity building, training and community empowerment on environmental issues across Burma. In 2005, KESAN started working with the Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS) to implement the women led Kachin Environment Project (KEP). This project drew on KESAN's experiences and lessons learned from activities implemented in Karen State, while focusing on the specific context and needs of Kachin communities. The KEP followed a Community Participatory Approach, through which problems were identified by local villagers. KEP workers then helped villagers find solutions and implement remedial actions and practices that improved local community health and livelihoods, improved food security and maintain and sustain community forests.

In 2009 and 2010, greater emphasis was placed on sustainable and organic farming practices and a recognition of the immense value of local food and medicinal plants. In addition to community based natural resource management projects, environment awareness training and education was undertaken in the community and in schools. A number of highly regarded environmental publications were also produced. KEP activities included:

- **Community based natural resource management**, which supported sustainable natural resource management activities that strengthened local livelihoods such as construction of irrigation systems, a community kitchen garden and an Experimental Farm and Farmer's Field School; holding a local fruit growing competition; and organizing farmer's knowledge



Sharing seeds, Kawg Ra Zup village Kachin State

exchange workshops and workshops on community forests, and organic composting and fruit preservation.

- **Environmental education and awareness activities** aimed at raising environmental awareness among community members and young people and encouraging their participation in protecting the environment. To



Experimenting with different seed varieties at the Experimental Farm, Kawg Ru Zup village, Kachin State.

this end, a variety of workshops and education awareness events were organized and steps were taken to incorporate environmental education into the KIO school curriculum. These workshops were so informative, popular and successful in raising participants' environmental awareness that many of the KEP trainers were invited back to teach semi-regularly.

- **Environmental media and publications** aimed at promoting Kachin language and traditions, respecting indigenous wisdom and practice, and protection the environment. Magazines, newsletters, children's books, information guides and short videos were produced and published in 2010. These materials continue to be an important advocacy tool for Kachin communities. Materials include a booklet and ten minute video on the history and background of World Environment Day, a booklet on sustainable rice growing practices and a children's cartoon book on trees. KEP also publishes the Kachin language "Grupyin Shanun" magazine.
- **Alliance building and networking.** The KEP collaborated on activities with other organisations and engaged with Kachin authorities to raise awareness about environmental issues. Local policy makers and administrators are now more aware of discussions on environment issues such as the use of human and environment damaging chemical inputs in sugar cane plantations. The Kachin Independence Organization has even issued a policy restricting sugar cane plantations to areas well away from residential areas. Local CBOs are also more aware of environmental issues and engaged in the protection of the environment.
- **Capacity building and staff training** to strengthen and support KEP's work and activities.

The success of KEP activities led to the 2011 formation of a fully independent organization known as BRIDGE. BRIDGE maintains the same experienced and enthusiastic team of project workers and continues to garner the good will of the local people.

## Case-study: Experimental Farm in Kachin State, Burma

The Experimental Farm is located in the Sinlum mountain range of Kachin State in an isolated area where access is difficult. Mountainous terrain and lack of adequate roads couples with an unstable security situation to make travel in this region difficult and dangerous. The Kachin Environment Program is one of the few organizations able to work in this region.

Regional deforestation is encouraged by a strong demand from China for wood. Wealthy Chinese businessmen ask poor villagers with little opportunity for sustainable income-generating activities and low levels of food security to log trees in return for a small payment. Although many villagers do not want to log the forest, they have few options to answer their short-term food security needs and do not fully understand the long-term consequences of logging on the health of the forest or the sustainability of their traditional lifestyles.

In 2010, in order to alleviate this problem and improve the food security of local farmers the KEP established a Farmer's Field School and Experimental Farm. The task required significant KEP time and labour. The Experimental Farm's goal was to provide



Improved traditional irrigation systems provides farmers with access to water to revitalize their abandoned paddy fields

a place for farmers to experiment with different varieties of rice, plants and vegetables in order to produce high yields using organic and sustainable techniques. The Experimental Farm is only the second of its kind in all of Kachin State.

The farm covers two acre of land previously left fallow for over 30 years. One fourth of the land is used for improving seeds and another fourth is cultivated and planted with paddy rice. To ensure seed quality the farm uses high quality natural compost and fertilizer. Planned activities for 2011 include planting vegetables and setting up an animal husbandry garden.

The Farm is also used as a training centre. Eight farmers who went on a 2-week exposure trip to Thailand have been able to use the Experimental Farm to teach other local farmers the practical application of what they learned about sustainable agriculture in Thailand. A seed-saving demonstration was also held at the farm.

The Experimental Farm is community owned. KEP staff facilitate its management. In its first year of operation, the Experimental Farm produced enough to provide food for trainers and participants. It is hoped that in the coming years yields will increase with the addition of organic compost and organic pest management techniques and that the harvest can be shared with the community.

Feedback from the community living near the Experimental Farm is extremely positive and encouraging. Many local people are looking forward to attending workshops

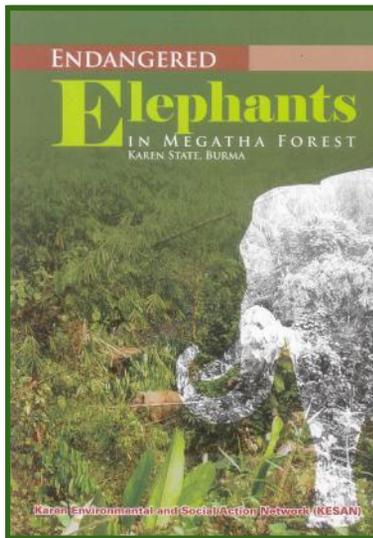


Farmers experiment to improve rice seed quality

and learning about sustainable agricultural techniques at the Experimental Farm. The long term vision for the Experimental Farm is to continue to increase yields and to provide a place where farmers in this remote area can come together to learn and share experiences on conducting sustainable agriculture for secure livelihoods – livelihoods in which locals are not susceptible to the influence of companies wanting to practice large-scale logging and deforestation.

## KESAN and Its Networks Publications

An essential part of KESAN's advocacy work has been the publication of research and biodiversity reports. Over the years, KESAN has published a broad range of publications in English and Karen languages. KESAN publications in English and Karen can be found on our website [www.kesan.asia](http://www.kesan.asia).

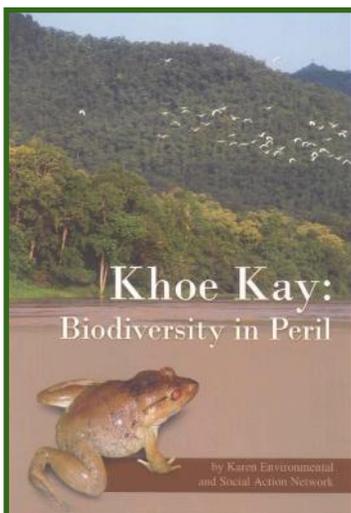
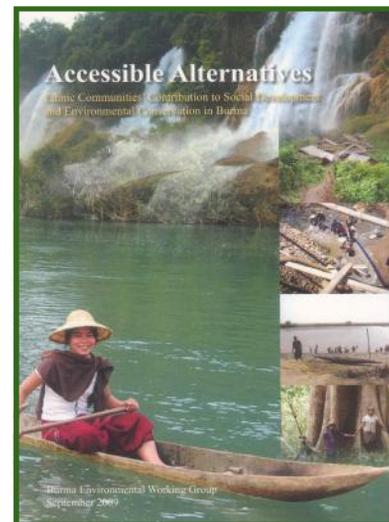


### Endangered Elephants in Megatha Forest, Karen State, Burma, 2010

This study documents the wild elephant population and rich biodiversity in Megatha Forest (also known as Megatha Wildlife Sanctuary), a corner of Karen State that is part of the elephants' native habitat. The Forest provides a good example of an intact ecosystem, but because 22 of the 60 species living there are at risk, the forest faces significant threats including ongoing war, militarization and accelerating natural resource exploitation.

### Accessible Alternatives: Ethnic Communities' Contribution to Social Development and Environmental Conservation in Burma, September 2009

The report consists of nine case studies that describe a variety of issues related to natural resource management in different parts of Burma, including Arakan, Kachin and Karen and Shan States. The report exposes the harsh impacts that are inflicted on the environment and the livelihoods of ethnic people by the current development path taken by Burma's military regime and argues for community based resource management as an alternative. This report is a product of members of Burma Environmental Working Group (BEWG).

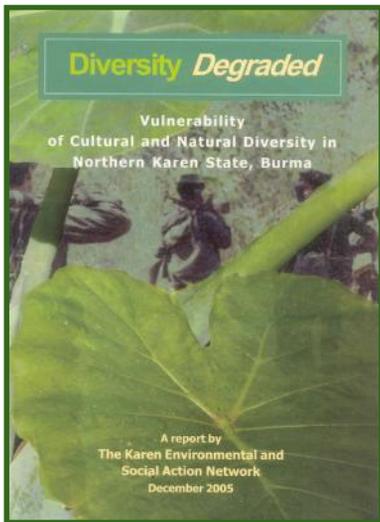
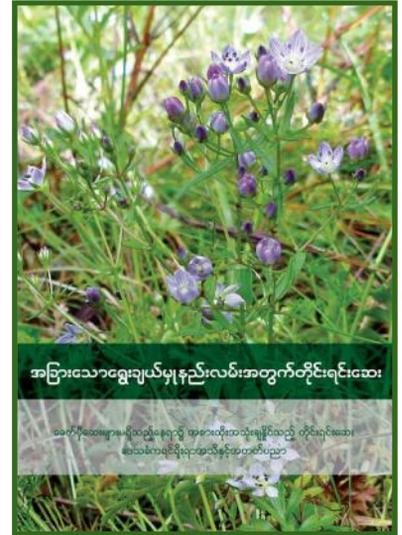


### Khoe Kay: Biodiversity in Peril, July 2008

This report documents the rich biodiversity found in Khoe Kay, a bend in the Salween River and exposes the severe threats faced by this stretch of the Salween, both from large dams and ongoing militarization. The report finds Khoe Kay to be studded with both plant and animal diversity, identifying 194 plant species and 200 animals. Forty two of these species are considered endangered and can be found in IUCN's redlist, the CITES appendices, or both; thus showing the urgency in protecting and promoting conservation in this area.

Traditional medicine handbook, 2008 (available in both Burmese and Karen)

The information gathered in the handbook was collected through interviews with elders and herbalists in seven districts of Karen State. Treatments were included in the handbook only when it was proven that the same treatment cured or alleviated maladies in more than 10 patients. The handbook includes information on treatment for 15 illnesses. It also includes information about where to find the necessary herbs, how to collect them, how to process the plants and what treatment to follow. The Karen version of this book is being reprinted by the Drum Publication Group.

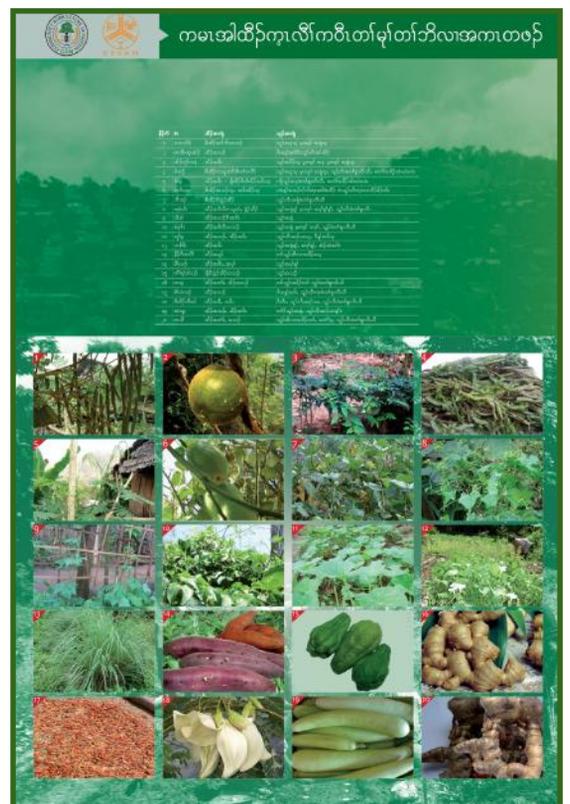


**Diversity Degraded: Vulnerability of Culture and Natural diversity in Northern Karen State, Burma, December 2005**

This report examines the effects of the longstanding civil war on Karen communities' cultural and natural environment with specific focus on the diversity of cultivated and collected plant species. The case study provides a general overview of communities with a detailed look at local knowledge-based farming systems. The report also outlines the importance of non timber forest products (NTFP) in food security and in women's traditional work.

**Promoting the growing of locally available plants poster, 2010 (Karen language)**

The poster encourages Karen refugees in Thailand and local people in Karen State how to collect and grow local plants and vegetables that will fulfill their dietary needs rather than relying on hybrid seeds from large companies. The 20 kinds of plants in this poster were selected by members of the Community Agriculture and Nutrition (CAN), a refugee camp-based organization supported by the Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC). This poster is a joint project of KESAN and TBBC.



Traditional agriculture handbook, 2009 (Karen language), Food security manual, 2010 (Karen language)

These manuals document traditional Karen agricultural techniques that reduce environmental impacts and promote sustainable farming. This is in contrast to modern techniques which normally involve an increased use of pesticides and seeds with shorter life spans than indigenous seeds.



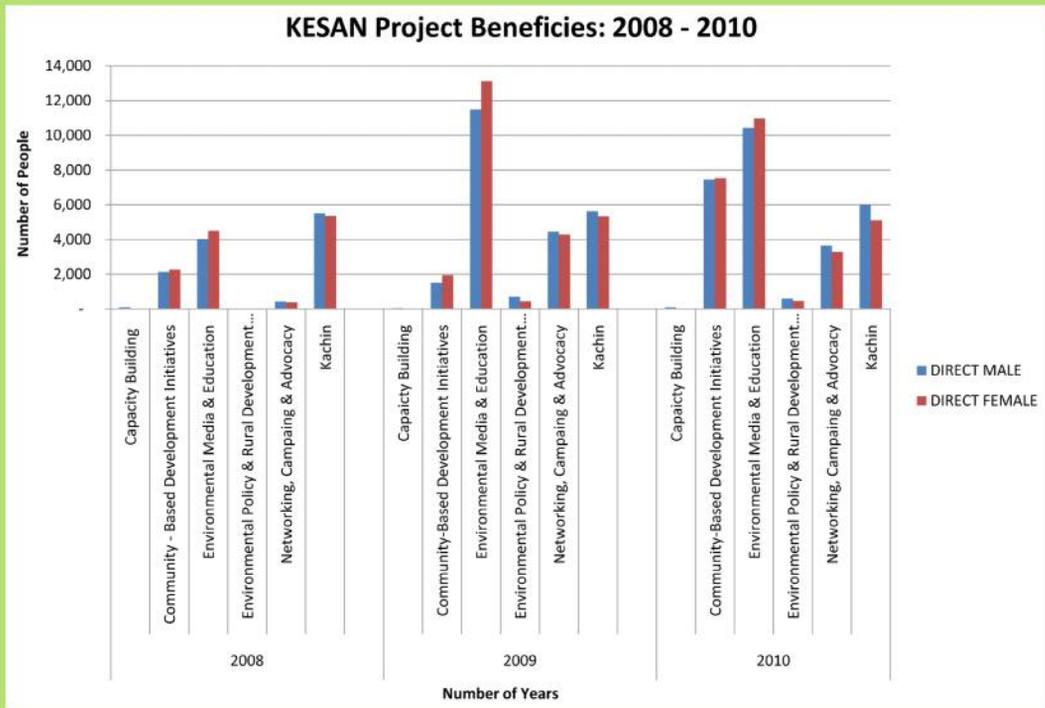
'Thuleikawwei magazine' environmental information in Karen State, published twice a year

KESAN's magazine targets decision-makers, community leaders and the Karen community. It aims to raise awareness and provide information on a variety of important issues. Examples of magazine subject matter include the impacts of mining and logging, sustainable resource management and sustainable environment practices.

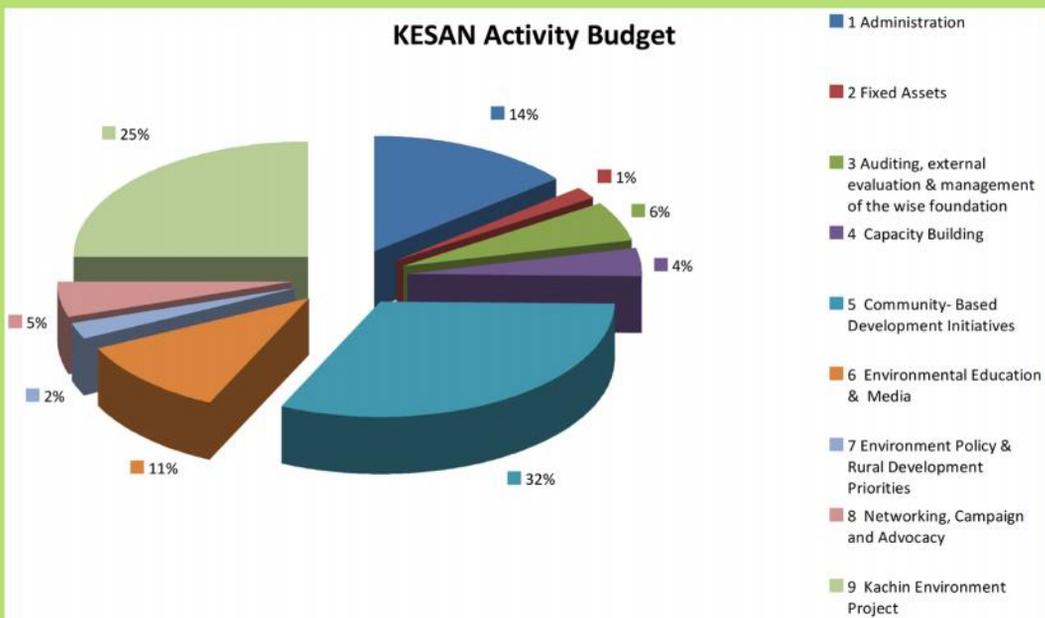


# Beneficiaries and Budget

Over the last three years, KESAN has directly worked in 57 villages in Karen and Kachin states. KESAN's project interventions directly benefited 129,300 individuals and indirectly benefited 361,550. Over 50% of current beneficiaries are women.



KESAN receives funding from a wide range of international organisations and foundations including the Open Society Institute, American Jewish World Service and the Wheeler Foundation. Between 2008 and 2010 KESAN received THB 35,672,316 to implement its activities. Community Based Initiatives remain its largest program, followed by environmental education and advocacy, networking and then campaigning.



## Conclusion and Way Forward

Over the years of 2008-2010, KESAN and its community project partners and strategic partners have seen many success by applying the five inter-linking strategies. The Community-Based Development Initiatives, Capacity Building, Environmental Education and Media, Environment Policies and Rural Development Priorities, and Networking, Campaigning and Advocacy programs have all interconnectedly contributed to achieving the overall objectives and milestones. Local communities in conflict areas in Karen and Kachin states have gained more confidence in securing their livelihoods and rights to use and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Significant gains have been made and important lessons have been learned over the past three years. KESAN and KEP staff agree that practical engagement and connection with local communities on project activities provided valuable experience and developed self-confidence for both staff and villagers. Case studies and quotes in this report demonstrate how communities feel inspired and empowered by project activities and new knowledge gained. Activities carried out by one community, such as herbal clinics and seed saving networks, inspire and provide hope to other communities. Activities revive pride in Karen cultural heritage and help to maintain indigenous knowledge. Increased knowledge and confidence has also led communities to hold decision-makers accountable, ensuring that their actions are of benefit to those they represent.

However, considerable gaps and challenges remain. Despite the gains made by KESAN in the development of practical and effective community-forest policies, strategic partners still lack the human resources and technical capacity to keep up with strong local community demand to establish and recognize more community forests and land entitlements. KESAN will address this issue by continuing to improve its strategic partners' technical capacity to assist and empower local communities to establish and maintain their community forests and land entitlements. Resource extraction and illegal logging activities continue to threaten the long-term viability of sustainable community forest management. KESAN plans to conduct further trainings and awareness campaigns to educate local communities and policy-makers on the negative impacts of these activities. Climate change and resulting natural disasters and extreme weather events have already had measurable negative impacts on food security and livelihoods for communities in our project areas. The unpredictability of climate will continue to jeopardize initiatives to promote sustainable development and secure livelihoods in rural Karen communities.

Looking ahead to the next three years, KESAN's 2011-2013 program "Building Self-Sufficient and Disaster Resilient Rural Karen Communities" plans to focus on and formalize the role of climate change research and adaptation in our community-based development initiatives. KESAN will continue to work with communities in developing locally relevant adaptation mechanisms that enhance the resilience of communities to climate change and protect gains made in food security and resources management. Trainings will be conducted on disaster preparedness and research will be conducted to identify coping mechanisms that increase the resilience of communities to climate change and extreme weather variability. KESAN will also strengthen activities to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in community development at all decision-making levels.

[www.kesan.asia](http://www.kesan.asia)