

# KESAN ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Empowering Communities to Protect the Environment,  
while Securing their Lands, Livelihoods and Peace



KESAN

Karen Environmental & Social Action Network

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**KESAN** is a community-based, non-governmental, non-profit organization that works to improve livelihood security and to gain respect for Indigenous people’s knowledge and rights in Karen State of Burma, where the violence and inequities of more than 70 years of civil war have created one of the most impoverished regions in the world. KESAN’s approach is based on the principles of democratization-from-below and “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” to support the development of sustainable rural livelihoods.



## Context

2025 marked four years since the 2021 military coup, and 76 years since the beginning of the Karen revolution. For communities across Kawthoolei, these are not distant anniversaries. They are part of daily life shaped by conflict, uncertainty, and continued struggle.

Violence escalated throughout the year. Military offensives by the State Administration Council continued, including repeated aerial attacks on civilian areas. According to Karen Human Rights Group, there were at least 124 airstrikes in Karen State in 2025, resulting in 125 civilian casualties. These figures can barely begin to reflect the reality on the ground. KPSN has estimated that more than half a million persons have been displaced since the 2021 Coup<sup>1</sup>. Our friends, families, and communities have been forced to flee, homes have been destroyed, and most of the communities where we work are living with constant fear.

On 28 March 2025, a powerful earthquake struck near Mandalay and affected much of central Myanmar. Many people were trapped under collapsed buildings, and communities immediately stepped in to help each other using whatever resources they had. In Kawthoolei, Taw Oo District was impacted, with homes damaged and families losing shelter. Even in the aftermath of the earthquake, airstrikes continued, including in affected areas, deepening the crisis for those already struggling to recover.



*Civilian infrastructure damaged by SAC air strikes*



*Houses destroyed by earthquake*

For many decades, local organizations and communities have been the first to respond in times of crisis. Whether facing conflict or natural disaster, they have supported one another with limited resources and strong networks of care. This continues today, even as the challenges grow more severe and funding becomes more uncertain.

Over the past three years, support for Myanmar from major international donors has declined, and the context has become more complex and difficult to operate in, limiting CSOs ability to plan over the long term and increasing pressure on already limited resources.

In the midst of enduring crises, our Karen communities continue to show remarkable resilience and determination. While the military junta pushed forward with plans for their sham election in December 2025, communities in Kawthoolei continued to build their own systems of governance. In the Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park, communities successfully completed the election of the Governing Committee through a transparent and inclusive process involving more than 113,000 people across 319 villages. This stands in sharp contrast to the violence and coercion of the Burma Army, and reflects a deep commitment to self-determination and community leadership.

At the same time, the role of community led governance systems continues to grow stronger given the absence of a legitimate central authority. Indigenous governance structures and local institutions are increasingly central to providing services, protecting rights, and holding communities together. In this context, there is a growing opportunity to strengthen governance models that are rooted in local knowledge, participation, and collective care, and that may help shape more just and inclusive futures.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.karenpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Briefing\\_Kawthoolei-IPD-update\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.karenpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Briefing_Kawthoolei-IPD-update_Eng.pdf)

# Community-based Livelihood Initiative Program

Supporting livelihoods for KESAN means much more than simply providing access to foodstuffs or money to communities. Rather, the CBLI program aims to build livelihoods within Karen communities that expand community food sovereignty, preserve traditional indigenous livelihood practices, and deepen resilience in the face of both ongoing conflict and climate change. Programming under CBLI thus centers community-led activities that diversify food and income sources for villagers and feed back into - rather than extract from - indigenous ecologies.

## Key Outcomes:

- More than 400 Karen farmers were supported with tools and seeds to increase their yield
- Women's economic security improved after the funds for 36 women-led enterprises were released and practical trainings for 254 women were conducted
- Market opportunities were expanded for 3,377 villagers thanks to the completed bridge

## Summary of Achievements:

### Irrigation system restoration

KESAN has been working with remote villages to construct and restore irrigation systems after seasonal floods, so that local paddy fields have reliable access to water. Before building irrigation canals, KESAN obtained FPIC from the communities, who provided their input on the design of the systems. The canals are large enough to provide water to all villagers residing in the target areas, benefiting 242 households, including 834 women.

### Upland farming

KESAN provided local farmers with agricultural tools to assist villagers in strengthening their food and livelihood security through improved self-reliance in food production with reliable yields. Overall, 155 households from five villages received upland farm support, gaining access to improved cultivation tools.

### Vocational trainings

In 2025, KESAN delivered a total of nine vocational trainings, helping develop the practical skills of community members and diversifying their income sources. Thanks to the wood-carving workshop, young people learned traditional techniques and tips on woodwork from elders. Besides this, 152 women learned cake, banana chip and tea making processing techniques and quality control practices to create value-added products. Three training sessions were provided for 102 women and four men, all of whom learned how to record income and expenses. Besides strengthening livelihood opportunities, these trainings have been helpful for daily life, improving financial management in individual households.

### Income generation for women-led households

To boost income-generation opportunities for women, KESAN has supported establishment of the 36 small-scale enterprises across Mutraw District, along with one self-help group in Ei Htu Hta IDP camp. The kick-off funds provided allowed them to borrow between 2,000 and 5,000 Thai Baht to buy dry foods in bulk and sell them to community members, thereby stimulating local trade and providing more access to food for women's families. Besides that, KESAN distributed starter funds to women to participate in durian paste, soap, and baking goods production activities, applying skills obtained from previous vocational training.



Training participants packaging freshly made banana chips



Women receiving a baking training at Ei Htu Hta IDP camp



Bridge constructed in Yeh Mu Plaw area



Women's group member presenting about activities

### Kitchen gardens

To ensure reliable access to home-grown foods and fresh vegetables, KESAN purchased and distributed sets of materials and tools to 11 families, enabling them to grow nutritious food and store seeds for the future.

### Sustainable livestock raising

KESAN delivered specialized trainings to almost 1,000 villagers involved in animal husbandry. These trainings combined Indigenous and scientific approaches to help villagers learn about animal disease prevention and treatment to protect community health and their livestock. Families interested in raising livestock for additional income received small grants, on the condition that, after selling the livestock, they would contribute 10% back to their community security fund, helping build community resilience.



One of the women at the project site feeding her chicken

### Bridge construction

Local communities from Luthaw Township requested support for the construction of a bridge so that students and young children could have a reliable way to commute to school. Overall, the completed bridge connected 3,377 villagers from 571 households, including 1,677 women, to better access nearby areas and strengthen their livelihoods.

### Rice bank system strengthening

As the rice bank system continues to expand across Mutraw and Hpa-an districts, KESAN focused on strengthening networks amongst separate rice banks, with 168 rice bank committee members gathering to exchange best practices and enhance cross-bank collaboration. Moreover, to ensure the reliability and ongoing improvement of the rice bank system, 21 meetings in eight clusters were held, involving 736 people, who had the opportunity to discuss the relevance of rules and regulations and decide which families need immediate support.

### Eco-learning centers

Karen communities gained access to more knowledge exchange spaces, thanks to the construction of eco-learning centres in Taw Oo District and in outreach areas in Mutraw District, where the Tamaytha eco-learning centre is functional. In 2025, villagers successfully started construction of the Taw Oo community space, alongside the opening of a fish conservation zone. In both Mutraw and Taw Oo eco-learning spaces, training sessions on sustainable project management, pest control, organic fertiliser making, and animal healthcare have been facilitated.



### Case Study: Seed Preservation as a Key to Food Sovereignty

Because of climate change and shifting weather patterns, Karen communities encounter various threats to their food security. Pest infestations and irregular precipitations particularly endanger Indigenous seeds, which are vital to Karen food sovereignty and represent a significant part of their biocultural heritage. To address this issue comprehensively, KESAN has been working with Karen farmers to promote seed saving and sharing practices, ingrained in Karen community ethos of “*Mah Doh Mah Kha*” (“I help you, you help me”).

At the Tamaytha community eco-learning centre in Mutraw District, Karen State, 116 farmers, including 37 women, gathered from various villages to exchange and share seeds as a part of their **Annual Seed Forum**. Together with the exchange, the Annual Seed Forum served as a mutual learning and awareness raising space, where farmers shared knowledge with each other about maintaining their seed heritage.

Local farmers began collecting data about **organic pest control research** to improve crop protection and pest management, thereby protecting Indigenous seed varieties. Simultaneously, KESAN provided rice seeds for **dry season rice varieties** (drought resistant) in 23 communities that are especially vulnerable to food insecurity. By piloting summer rice, farmers focus on diversifying their food sources available throughout the year.

In addition, 189 families received cash grants to purchase and store rice seeds. In each area, participating in the seed grants initiative, a **Seed Savings Committee** has been established, composed of local community members. These committees are responsible for keeping track of and overseeing which seeds are at risk of being lost, discussing ways to mitigate the potential loss of seeds at regular meetings, discussing mutual support with other committees, and reintroducing seeds back into the community.



*Villagers sharing their indigenous seeds with each other*

# Environmental Education Program

Over the past 25 years, conflict, Burma Army violence, extractive developmental agendas, and climate change have placed the cultural knowledge and practices of Karen communities from across Kawthoolei under constant threat. The Environmental Education Program seeks to serve as a salve to these ongoing erasures. It aims to preserve, uplift, and share Karen histories, knowledge, and cultural practices amongst Karen communities, particularly as these relate to the unique relationship that Karen communities hold with their surrounding ecologies.

## Key Outcomes:

- The first ever Climate Resilience Forum in Doo Tha Htoo District and the first Intergenerational Dialogue Forum in the Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park were organized
- Historical and Sacred Sites Research culminated in the publication of “*The Living Cultural Landscape: Sacred and Historical Lands in the Salween Peace Park*” research book
- Celebrations of the *International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples* were hosted in four villages across the Salween Peace Park

## Summary of Achievements:

### World Environment Day

KESAN organized celebrations marking *World Environment Day* on 5 June 2025 in two SPP villages. The events saw attendance from a total of 723 participants,

including 440 women, and included traditional wisdom keepers, religious leaders, and youth. It focused on demonstrating the commitment of Peace Park communities to environmental stewardship and solidarity against plastic pollution across the world.

### International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

On 9 August, KESAN marked *International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples* in four SPP villages, bringing together 1,690 villagers, with participants comprising 50% women, from across different parts of the Park. These events were opportunities for Karen communities to reassert their social, cultural, political, and territorial rights and show their connection to the many indigenous peoples across the world who have faced oppression at the hands of violent central governing actors.

### Climate Resilience Forum

Indigenous Karen communities across Kawthoolei face ongoing threats from the changing climate, as their entanglements with the lands on which they live face growing levels of stress from drought, unseasonal rains, and the spread of pests. The Climate Resilience Forum served to strengthen and allow the sharing of inter-community knowledge and coping mechanisms related to the climate. For the first time ever, KESAN conducted this three-day forum in Doo Tha Htoo District, where 55 people from local communities, environmental working groups, other CBOs, and KNU representatives came together in September to address these climate threats collectively.



Teacher explaining cotton-making processes at the ToT



Community drawing their village map and identifying disaster-prone areas

### Intergenerational Dialogue Forum

In order to share the knowledge and cultural heritage embedded in indigenous Karen communities, KESAN helped organize the first ever *Intergenerational Dialogue Forum* in the Thawthi Taw-Oo Indigenous Park (TTIP). The Forum helped Karen youth, community leaders, and knowledge holders to come together in order to strengthen the breadth of knowledge within communities. More than 304 participants, including 177 women, from the TTIP, CBOs, local schools, and KNU departments joined the three-day Forum. As one student from the Karen Teacher Training College reflected. *“I’ve gained considerable knowledge on the important roles of forest and biodiversity in ecosystem services and the intrinsic benefits that we gain from them through the event. I want to urge our fellow students joining this event to collectively come up with the school-initiated environmental stewardship activities in their schools after this event.”* KESAN also organized another Intergenerational Dialogue Forum in January, attended by 482 participants, including 262 women in the SPP.

### Climate Awareness and Adaptation

KESAN completed four different climate change awareness raising trainings across Doo Tha Htoo District, the TTIP, and the SPP, in total attended by 142 community members, KNU departmental staff, and local committee members. These trainings focused



Local youth presenting his village map during the climate change awareness training

on strengthening biocultural knowledge and skills and promoted community resilience as grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems.

### Waste Management awareness raising

Waste pollution continues to be a threat to the wellbeing of both the natural ecosystems and Karen communities from across Kawthoolei. KESAN worked to address this ongoing concern through a series of efforts to strengthen both awareness of waste issues and waste management systems in Karen villages. KESAN organized waste management committees, held awareness raising campaigns, distributed educational toolkits and materials, and helped develop waste management infrastructure in five different villages and at one school in the SPP.



Participants joining the World Indigenous Peoples Day



Community elders sharing cultural weaving knowledge



Key historical items collected during TTIP cultural research

### Biocultural Research Group and Cultural Curriculum

For several years, KESAN has worked with the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) to develop and implement a new cultural curriculum for students in the SPP. During the 2024/25 Academic Year, this curriculum was finally rolled out to Grade 7, 8, and 9 students in 28 middle and high schools across Kawthoolei. Additionally, KESAN has also helped develop and implement a traditional handicrafts program in two schools in the SPP. In total, the first batch of students enrolled in this course included 80 students from the two schools, from between Grade 2-9. This curriculum should serve to help bridge knowledge gaps across generations, allowing younger community members to engage with the cultural knowledge that has been lost over the past 70 years of Burma Army violence. In the neighbouring TTIP, KESAN supported the formation

of a biocultural research group, which also indicated an interest in contributing to a cultural curriculum incorporating knowledge from their area.

### School Organic Gardens

Indigenous Karen adhere to the concept of *Or K'Tor* ("eat and preserve") as central to ensuring ecological regeneration and wellbeing for them and their surrounding landscapes. To this end, KESAN works with colleges in Kawthoolei to help establish school gardens that strengthen access to local food for students and surrounding communities. This year, KESAN helped establish school gardens at Karen National College and at Kaw Moo Rah Junior College, in addition to the three other gardens that KESAN has supported at other schools in years prior.



Establishment of school organic gardens

## Case Study: Historical and Sacred Sites research

Researching historical and sacred sites was first expressed as an interest of community members in the SPP at the very first public consultation meeting in 2016. In 2024-2025, KESAN was able to help realize this long-stated aim in collaboration with the KNU and SPP, with all three organisations supporting research carried out by 14 local researchers across the SPP. Through interviews, focus group discussions, community resource/village mapping, spirit sites mapping, community historical timelines, transect walks, *Hta* (traditional poems), storytelling, and oral histories, the research team assembled a collection of local histories that capture the indigenous Karen practices and their spiritual beliefs. This was published as *The Living Cultural Landscape: Sacred and Historical Lands in the Salween Peace Park*.

This research covers 14 of the 70 sacred sites recognized by indigenous Karen in the SPP and covers what the researchers consider to be the most historically and culturally rich sites in the area. This process of documentation helps demonstrate the intimate relationship that Karen share with their land and ensures that knowledge can be passed between generations of the historical, political, social, and cultural importance of these sites. More than 1,200 copies of this publication were released to SPP communities, but communities have asked for more copies. There are hopes to continue distribution and translate the publication into English in the coming years and continue sacred sites documentation.

### Translated Excerpt on *Hlo Pwor Bi* (Spiritual Gravesite):

One day, local people from Kawthayghu noticed that all the *Ku Ter Ti* baskets from the Lohti (spiritual gravesite) at Kay Thoo Kho Mountain had disappeared without their knowledge. However, they found 54-inch footsteps (which is equivalent to three *Plar* in the Karen (K'nyaw) measurement system) near the Lohti. When they followed the tracks, the footsteps led them to *Hlo Pwor Bi*, where the missing *Ku Ter Ti* were found stored and kept. Local elders also explained that *Hlo Pwor Bi* is known among local Indigenous communities as the independent gravesite of the Karen (K'nyaw) legendary figure *Pu K'Ter*.

The revered spiritual gravesite of *Hlo Pwor Bi* is adjacent to three Indigenous Kaw customary territories, including *Kawthayghu*, *Khoe Kyar Der*, and *Tar Wah* in Luthaw Township. *Hlo Pwor Bi* has an altitude of 4,116 feet (1,254 meters) above sea level. After the spiritual entities transported and kept the *Ku Ter Ti* of the dead at *Hlo Pwor Bi*, Indigenous communities collectively decided to designate it as the spiritual gravesite or spirit world of the dead, a status it maintains to this day. According to oral traditions, during the great ancestral flood, the peak of this forested mountain remained only the size of a *T' Bi* (Karen (K'nyaw) wooden bowl), which is why the name *Pwor Bi Kho* (Pwor Bi Mountain) and *Hlo Pwor Bi* (Pwor Bi spiritual gravesite) continue to be used. In honor of this revered spiritual territory, local communities refer to it as *K'Ser Doh*, meaning “Big Mountain”.

# Wildlife and Biodiversity Program

Indigenous Karen people hold a deep relationship with the natural landscapes that make up their homes. KESAN’s Wildlife and Biodiversity team supports the flourishing of the natural flora and fauna in these areas, combining indigenous knowledge with new technology to both empower villagers to protect their forests and their wildlife and to share traditional knowledge born from these forests. Their work stretches from research on both Karen oral histories and local species in Kawthoolei to community-integrated forest patrolling and monitoring.

## Key Outcomes:

- Launched the Indigenous-driven KERBWA app to support ongoing forest patrolling efforts
- Supported 24 community forest patrols in four different wildlife protected areas and community forests
- Published ‘The Ontologies of Indigenous Karen People: a case study in Kawthayghu, Salween Peace Park, Kawthoolei’

## Summary of Achievements:

### Community-based forest patrolling

KESAN supported 23 community forest patrols in the P’Ngwe Pwa Community-based Wildlife Protected Area, Kholotraw areas, Kaydoh Mae Nyaw and Klermu Thoopli Wildlife Sanctuaries, the proposed Yumujoh Protected Area, and the Lan Kee Community Forest. Community rangers observed endangered wildlife and reported illegal activities to the Kawthoolei Forestry

Department (KFD), strengthening regulations. After patrols, consultations in Khesorter and Wai Bu Hta Village shared forest updates and addressed challenges faced by rangers. KFD and KESAN also conducted SMART training for local rangers and staff on mapping, data collection, and community involvement in forest protection.

### Durian jam and honey production

Community rangers were trained to produce sustainable income-generating products- durian jam and locally-collected honey in communities in and near the Kaydoh Mae Nyaw Wildlife Sanctuary, so that community members would not need to extract more natural resources from the forests there. KESAN facilitated two trainings encompassing 63 community rangers and people residing near Kaydoh Mae Nyaw Wildlife Sanctuary. As a result of the training, 52 kg of durian jam and 64 bottles of honey were produced, which resulted in a profit of 16,660 Thai baht that was then distributed among the project participants.

### Camera traps

The Wildlife and Biodiversity Team, community rangers, and Mutraw KFD conducted a camera trap survey in P’Ngwe Pwa and Lay Ghaw Pwa Community-based Wildlife Protected Areas to document wildlife and plan future preservation based on Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. Before deploying 29 camera traps, consultation meetings took place informing villagers and gaining their consent. These meetings raised awareness of KFD rules, regulations, and recent



Community rangers planning for forest patrolling



Preparations for the production of durian jam



Setting up a camera trap

arsenic findings in the Salween River. The survey results, shared with villagers and leaders in Keh Kah Hkee village, are vital for creating protection measures and expanding knowledge of Kawthoolei biodiversity.

### Community mobilization and awareness raising

KESAN, alongside the KFD and Salween Peace Park (SPP) Governing Committee, held a number of consultations on KFD regulations, and biodiversity preservation in the Salween basin. In Wai Bu Hta, Mutraw District, KESAN consulted with Mutraw KFD and community representatives on replacing the Lay Ghaw Pwa Community-based Wildlife Protected Area with Wa Taw Wa Reh, given its size, wildlife, and watersheds. Representatives of 14 villages gathered to discuss environmental conservation and wildlife protection strategies grounded in Indigenous Karen knowledge and cultural practices as key objectives to establish Kaydoh Maenyaw Wildlife Sanctuary. During July 2025 Kawthoolei Tree Planting Day, 2,000 trees, including teak, ironwood, and fruit, were planted to support wildlife, improve soil, and raise awareness about conserving Kawthoolei's resources. Toe Thay Der villagers received training on waste management, learning how plastic wastes impact the environment, wildlife and human health.

### Indigenous Karen Ontologies

The *Ontologies of Indigenous Karen People: A case study in Kawthayghu, Salween Peace Park, Kawthoolei* explores Indigenous Karen ontologies, covering themes from spiritual beliefs to wildlife protection. A total of 500 copies were distributed. KESAN aims to share this with younger generations through campaigns, workshops, and youth camps at educational institutions under the KNU. KESAN held a youth-centered workshop, using the Karen Ontologies book to raise awareness of Karen beliefs and introduce environmental concepts.

### Kheshorter Women's Research Group

KESAN has worked successfully with the Kheshorter Women's Research Group over the last year to strengthen Indigenous Karen research opportunities. This Research Group carried out the final ethnobotanical survey in northern SPP and recorded several endangered



Kheshorter Women's Research Group

species including species used for food, medicine, and in cultural ceremonies. They also continued their seasonal inventory surveys on amphibians in Noh Blaw and Noh Der Lakes, which are deeply significant to the local community both spiritually and ecologically.

Later in the year, the Kheshorter Women's Research Group carried out preliminary research on the upper Bweloklo River and its tributaries in the SPP to explore fish richness, abundance, and environmental conditions. This study discovered 4 species of fish undocumented in published peer-reviewed scientific literature and was able to document the core traditional methods of fish management and their importance towards protecting the watershed and surrounding natural resources.

Beyond the research, they continued their awareness raising activities in their local communities, advising and leading environmental governance work including spearheading reforestation efforts of wildlife corridors and habitats.

### Community-based wildlife protected area demarcation and establishment

Mutraw District KFD and KESAN assisted communities to demarcate the P'Ngwe Pwa Community-based Wildlife Protected Area. During consultation meetings in Mutraw District 249 participants were involved in strengthening locally-led environmental conservation efforts. Another meeting focused on discussing the boundaries of the Perkoh Doh Perkoh Poe Wildlife Sanctuary such as an area to be included and preserved as a wildlife sanctuary. At both meetings, the KFD presented and asked for community members' input for the rules and regulations in reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries, community forests, and community-based wildlife protected areas.

### Case study: KERBWA App

KESAN, in collaboration with Web Essentials and Forest and Peoples Organization, launched the Kawthoolei Ecosystem Resilience and Biodiversity Watch Application (KERBWA), designed as an Indigenous-led, digital forest monitoring tool. The application supports Indigenous Karen community rangers to monitor biodiversity and simultaneously document any illegal activities (hunting, mining, and logging) in protected community forests, reserve forests, and wildlife sanctuaries across Kawthoolei. KERBWA's system has a built-in dynamic dashboard that allows Karen data managers to utilize forest data that, in turn can better inform decision-making and policy actions by those responsible for ensuring forest lands and animals are protected. Thanks to an inclusive design process, even those without an IT background can easily access and utilize KERBWA's cloud-based dashboard to manage their forest data easily and securely.

Prior to the pilot testing phase of KERBWA, KESAN held community consultations in 3 villages in Luthaw Township, with 97 attendees. The aim behind the community consultations was to explain the purpose of and gain consent for KERBWA's use from local community leaders. Involving community members and gaining consent allows for long-term sustainability of the KERBWA system and ensures that the application is inclusive, participatory by nature, and adopts Indigenous voices.

Later in the year, KESAN co-organized a Training for Trainers (TOT) with the KFD. During the training, 37 participants were equipped with skills to easily use KERBWA for monitoring and were equipped to train other community rangers to protect their protected forests.

To conclude the pilot phase of KERBWA and begin expanding KERBWA across Kawthoolei, 194 participants from the Salween basin convened to discuss KERBWA's preliminary findings and future forest governance strategies. At this first collective review and reflection session, key forest protection leaders were able to begin integrating concrete evidence into long-term management plans for lands and forests.



# Land and Forest Program

KESAN’s Land and Forest Program continues to work to coordinate community-based conservation and policy development with the KNU in order to advance land tenure rights, protect Kawthoolei’s forests, and preserve local Indigenous knowledge of community geographies.

## Key Outcomes:

- More than 2,100 women secured land tenure rights for their family plots
- The outer boundaries of four *Kaw* were demarcated in Dwelo Township, encompassing a total of 6,528 hectares (65.3 km<sup>2</sup>)
- 102 KNU administrators completed thematic trainings focused on strengthening implementation and understanding of the Kawthoolei Land Policy and draft Agriculture Policy

## Summary of Achievements:

### Yomujoe Protected Area (proposed)

In March 2025, KESAN facilitated a consultation between district officials and community representatives to discuss a management plan for the Yomujoe Wildlife Conservation Area, a vital biodiversity hotspot, located on the border of Mutraw and Kler Lwee Htoo Districts. This discussion covered consideration of villagers’ livelihoods and provided opportunities to contemplate any disputes related to the proposed conservation area boundaries. KESAN also supported the Kawthoolei Forestry Department (KFD) in preparing maps of the area, completing surveys of the area, and redefining boundaries as requested by community members.

### Family Plot (Household) titles

KESAN provided technical support to assist the KAD to demarcate and register titles in all seven KNU districts

throughout 2025, providing household land titles for 6,901 plots covering 18,240 hectares. In total, these titles were issued to 4,747 men and 2,154 women. During the process of registering their lands, villagers learned about their rights, roles, and responsibilities conferred by their title.

### Kaw outer boundary demarcation

KESAN supported community consultations and outer boundary demarcation in four *Kaw* in Dwelo Township, in the Salween Peace Park in 2025, covering an area of 6,528 hectares and including villages with a population of 1,156 villagers. *Kaw* demarcation helps support the revitalization of customary land management practices, promote sustainable land use, and strengthen villager land rights. Following consultation with community leaders, KNU officials, and villagers, KESAN was able to demarcate the outer boundary of the *Kaws* and have set plans to demarcate the inner boundaries in the future.

KESAN also supported a participatory mapping of one *Kaw* in Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park. After demarcation, the KAD GIS team developed a *Kaw* map and shared it with communities to ensure the correct boundaries were recorded. The application has been submitted, waiting for its turn for approval to receive an official certification from the Central KNU.



*Land owners with their registered family plot behind them*



Community members registering their lands in Doo Tha Htoo District

### Agriculture Policy awareness training

Work continues to support knowledge and awareness of the KNU’s draft Agriculture Policy. KESAN helped move this work along by organizing a training in February 2025 in Dooplaya District for a group of 54 ground-level administrators and community leaders focused on developing an understanding of the rights and procedures laid out in the Policy.

### Land Policy awareness training

To ensure that KNU officials have a deep understanding of the KNU’s Land Policy, KESAN helped organize an

awareness training for a group of 48 representatives from the Kawthoolei Agriculture Department (KAD), the KNU Tax and Finance Department, District-level officials, village tract leaders, and other chairpersons and committee members from Wor Ray Township, Dooplaya District in February 2025. By discussing how the Land Policy was developed, the rights of land holders, taxation, and dispute resolution mechanisms, these trainings help ensure that officials can effectively apply the Policy to support community members.



KAD staff helping community members to fill in land registration forms



Kaw boundary mapping in the TTIP

## Indigenous Conserved Territories

Following the Salween Peace Park's (SPP) launch in 2018, work on Indigenous Conserved Territories has continued to gather pace, with the launch of the Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park (TTIP) in 2024 and ongoing work on the Paw K'lo Indigenous Stewardship Territory (PIST), in Mergui-Tavoy District. These areas are proof of the effectiveness of landscape-level bottoms-up democratic governance built on indigenous principles of environmental conservation. Across both the TTIP and SPP, General Assembly and Governing Committees' elections took place and community members continued their active participation, despite the ongoing threat of air strikes in their areas. In the PIST, the Charter preparations continued as the area's launch approaches in 2026.

### Key Outcomes:

- In the SPP, the 6th Session of the SPP General Assembly was convened, with SPP residents joining to review past initiatives and plan forward
- TTIP was able to hold its first election since the official launch, with the Indigenous-led TTIP Governing Committee appointed
- PIST finalized its signature campaign and scheduled their official launch for 2026

### Salween Peace Park

In 2025, the SPP continued showcasing the viability of the Indigenous-led governance model, with SPP

residents actively involved in conservation initiatives and political processes, with land rights more secured. A major milestone was the formal inclusion of the SPP in the Global Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas (ICCA) Registry, integrating it into the global effort to support Indigenous rights.

### SPP Assembly Session

The 6th SPP Assembly Session became the highlight of 2025. Despite political uncertainty, the indigenous communities successfully convened, with 194 people joining, to advance governance, self-determination, environmental protection and cultural practices, and demonstrate their resilience. The Forum provided a platform for SPP General Assembly members and working groups to reflect on their work over two years and to review the SPP Charter through an inclusive, participatory process.

### SPP Governing Committee Meetings

Throughout 2025, KESAN supported three SPP Governing Committee meetings, which were crucial for preparing the SPP Assembly Session in December and for monitoring the implementation of initiatives. These meetings provided a space for discussing essential issues related to SPP's future, involving township and village authorities, community wildlife rangers, SPP General Assembly members, KESAN, KWO, and other stakeholders. One meeting focused on the proposed outer boundary of Perkoh Doh Perkoh Poe Wildlife



SPP Annual Forum



Traditional song performed by The Nu Chet La School

Sanctuary and addressed community concerns. The SPP Calendar 2026 design was also finalized and presented.

### Capacity Building for the new SPP Governing Committee and Working Groups

In June, KESAN facilitated a capacity building workshop to strengthen knowledge of newcomers about the SPP and its institutions, Indigenous Peoples and their socio-political struggle for self-governance and self-determination over ancestral territory, enhancing their skills in action planning to effectively engage in the stewardship of indigenous territories. The participants were also introduced to strategic planning and started contributing to the development of SPP.

### SPP Climate Action Plan

To support development of the *SPP Climate Action Plan*, KESAN organized a consultation workshop at the Indigenous Eco-Learning Center in Luthaw Township in September. In total, 101 participants joined the action plan consultation, including SPP governing committee members, KNU district and department officials, CBO members, and local teachers and elder council members. The meeting served to help develop a draft of the plan by setting out steps needed to mitigate climate change impacts, assess current institutional capacities, and designate appropriate responsibilities amongst stakeholders.



Presentation of recognition and certificate to SPP by the KNU

## Thawthi-Taw Oo Indigenous Park

The TTIP, the second Indigenous Conserved Territory launched in Kawthoolei which shares the border with the SPP, successfully moved towards holding its first General Assembly election and solidifying Indigenous-driven governance. In 2025, multiple local elections took place, simultaneously with customary land demarcation and ethnobotanical survey.

### TTIP General Assembly's Community and Ethnic Representatives Elections

The election of community and ethnic representatives before the TTIP General Assembly is a vital step to ensure realisation of the TTIP Charter. KESAN provided for the Taw Oo District authorities to conduct local elections in 18 village tract areas across two townships in Taw Oo District. More than 1,000 people participated in the elections. Electoral processes were also planned among six ethnic groups – Kanyaw Wah, Keh Bah, Mo Pwa, Paku, Mo Nay Pwa, and Bwe. This process was taken to ensure inclusive, and equitable representation within the TTIP General Assembly, considering ethnic diversity within the TTIP.

### TTIP General Assembly Election

TTIP successfully convened its first General Assembly and completed the election process for the TTIP Governing Committee (GC) from December 10-12. Despite the high security risk, a total of 365 participants representing central KNU government, Taw Oo District leaders from relevant departments, TTIP General Assembly members, Karen CBOs, Mutraw District and SPP delegates, Indigenous elders, students and teachers, and religious leaders attended the three-day Assembly session. In moving forward and achieving TTIP's goals, the newly elected GC formed nine working groups to help realize the proposed activities of TTIP. The working groups included land management, natural resource management, public awareness raising, conflict resolution and reconciliation, documentation and publication, cultural revitalization, women and children protection, disciplinary and enforcement, and financial management working groups.



The newly elected 11-member TTIP Governing Committee

### TTIP Working Group Meetings

TTIP Governing Committee members, thematic working groups, district leaders and departmental officials, KWO, KYO, KSNB, KESAN and other relevant stakeholders met consistently to discuss updates on the conflict and ground situation, addressed emerging challenges and opportunities, and introduced new projects and plans in TTIP, including December election, to ensure all stakeholders are aligned and informed.

### Ethnobotanical Survey on Medical Plants

In 2025, TTIP was able to conduct a survey documenting the community's traditional knowledge of medicinal plants used for healing and disease treatments. It was conducted with well-known local herbalists or healers in Taw Oo District. The findings indicate that collected herbal medicines can be used to treat up to 80 common diseases including fevers, malaria, diarrhoea, skin diseases, common colds, dislocations, muscle pain/strain, cuts, burns, and bruises.



Elected representatives taking oath



Indigenous elder playing traditional music



TTIP election voting process



*Charter Consultation with Pawklo communities*

## **Pawklo Indigenous Stewardship Territory**

After more than six years of preparatory work, the much anticipated launch of the PIST is approaching in April 2026. However, before this momentous step, key preparations were required, including stakeholder consultations and signature collections for the Pawklo Charter. KESAN supported Pawklo residents in holding meetings to help finalize the Charter, and also helped with signature collection, a process for which communities showed a high level of engagement and enthusiasm.

### **Pawklo Charter Consultations**

The temporary governing body that oversees Pawklo initiatives, the Pawklo Landscape Committee, has collaborated with local communities, the KNU Mergui-Tavoy District, township officials and civil society organisations throughout 2025. These have included meetings involving at least 790 people in multiple Charter consultations to finalize this guiding document. This initiative is aimed at ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process regarding the Charter’s content and phrasing, fostering greater transparency and inclusivity.

### **Signature Campaigns for Charter Approval**

After compiling the final version of the Pawklo Charter, signature campaigns took place in 11 villages within the Upper PIST, with participation exceeding 3,000 individuals. In addition, the villagers also installed village and school signboards with information about the PIST in 19 villages across the Pawklo Landscape. This

collaborative effort highlights the active participation of the community alongside other key stakeholders in both the development and endorsement of the Pawklo Charter. Following the signature campaign, a meeting for data validation was organized. A total of 68 people attended, including Pawklo committee members, KNU departmental leaders, village committee members and leaders, KYO, KWO, KESAN, Trip Net and other stakeholders who took part in the signature collection campaign. The specific objective was to identify an errors in signature collection processes and ensure accuracy in data processing for decision-making.



*Pawklo Charter consultation with communities*



*Pawklo Charter presentation with district, township and CBO/CSO leaders*

# Water Governance Program

In 2025, the KESAN Water Governance team worked on strengthening community capacity to withstand climate change and water-related challenges, ensuring they have the tools and skills to protect and govern their water resources. The team also focused on supporting displaced communities, especially youth, to ensure they have sufficient income opportunities. Salween river water testing was initiated to address concerns about water quality.

## Key Outcomes:

- Community-driven water governance supported
- Multiple coordination meetings with other CSOs held to improve humanitarian and development project delivery
- More than 450 community members joined the Water Forum and World Fishery Day

## Summary of Achievements:

### Karen Livestock and Fishery Department Capacity building

The *Strengthening Ethical Practice Towards Community Rights Training* took place in November 2025, in Doo Tha Htu District with 20 participants. The training for Kawthoolei Livestock and Fishery Department (KLFD) staff members focused on effective communication with local communities, emphasizing listening and community speaking, importance of trust building, accountability, accessible information, community welfare, and respectful decision-making. Discussions on rules and regulations of livestock and fisheries practices led to amendments related to grazing and fisheries, updating outdated rules and adding new ones for rivers and pollution, while considering local practices, climate change, and conflicts between livestock and agriculture.

The other three meetings strengthened stakeholder coordination on environmental and community rights and resource governance, ensuring continued cooperation despite staff changes. Discussions covered

gaps, limitations, and management strategies. An updated action plan was created to guide future local governance efforts.

### Community Water Forum

The Community Water Forum, held on World Water Day on March 22, in Doo Tha Htu District, had 155 participants from 9 villages, including community members, youth, KNU township and district leaders, along with departmental representatives. The event's theme was 'Where Water Flows, Life Grows', and during the forum community members shared about water resource decline due to climate change, deforestation, pollution, and conflict. KESAN collaborated with KLFD to organize activities to foster community engagement, strengthen local water stewardship, and improve collaboration with KNU departments. The Forum concluded with a community reflection assessing their water sources, highlighting their importance beyond basic needs for all, especially for IDPs during conflicts.

### Climate Change Capacity Building Training

To understand community challenges, KESAN collaborated with the KLFD to hold climate change trainings. Eight communities became more aware of climate change impacts on their livelihoods and resources. They discussed how chemicals used for agricultural causes damage, and that, conversely, traditional methods, though not quick, promote sustainability. They recognized their rights and the importance of traditional knowledge and



Thoo Mwe Kee Organic Farm

resource management in addressing climate change. Communities have learned responses and made some concrete plans to apply these methods on farms.

### Foundation of Animal Veterinary Care Training

An *Animal Veterinary Care Training* was held from April 1-10 in Kwee Lay Pu Village, Htee Maw Kee Group, for the first time in DooThaHtu District. The 30 participants, equally split between women and men, mainly included township KLFD representatives, with Kwee Lay village as the only village involved. The training combined lectures and practical sessions on animal health, anatomy, pharmaceuticals, diseases, control, and prevention. Following the trainings, KLFD members and village representatives will conduct vaccinations in four or more villages, raising community awareness of effective animal care methods. KLFD staff were also able to improve their knowledge and skills for animal care and treatments.

### A Kyu Lake community conservation efforts

28 participants, including community members, officials, and KESAN members, reviewed A Kyu Lake’s status and community conservation efforts. Conservation began years ago through community and District Forest department collaboration, including demarcating the lake, forest, and farmland boundaries, which now need re-verification. The committee, which will oversee conservation, with existing rules, and community issues, have been identified. They seek continued conservation, deeper learning, and capacity building. Action items include boundary re-verification, rule review, raising awareness, and participatory learning.



Participant exploring the exhibition



Drawing representing partnership collaboration and evaluation

### World Fisheries Day

In November, communities in Doo Tha Htu and Dooplaya Districts, along with District and Township Kawthoolei Livestock and Fishery Department, organized World Fisheries Day. The event promoted community involvement, resource management, and raised awareness of rivers, lakes, freshwater ecosystems, local and small-scale fisheries, linking Kwee Ta (fish conservation area) to ecological value, culture, and livelihoods. In Doo Tha Htu, 315, including 124 women, involving students and community members, from district and township departments, students, locals, elders, and civil society organizations attended.

### Demarcation of community-led conservation areas

Doo Tha Htu District KLFD officials, together with township KLFD representatives led the demarcation of community Kwee Ta zones. Kwee Ta protect fish species, and some conduct communal harvesting every three years. During this activity, district and township KLFD representatives met with 147 community members, elders, and committees. One community refused demarcation due to conflicting local practices but agreed to first have a community discussion. Following a village consultation, they plan to send a letter outlining each Kwee Ta’s history, area, and details to the Kwee Ta Committee and village heads. All data will be recorded and stored in KLFD’s system.

### Environmental Awareness Training

An environmental awareness event, organized by KSNG, KESAN, KRW, and SSN under the theme *Save the Thoo Moei River*, took place on December 20. It focused on

sustainable water management, river protection, and youth leadership, with 44 participants, mainly youth and students. The training included sharing information about river and environmental protection, updates on the Salween River contamination, and discussions. By the end, participants created small action plans on river protection, pollution management, and other initiatives, and identified resource needs to implement them. The event highlighted concerns about arsenic contamination in the Salween River, which affects the Moei River, a tributary, emphasizing community access to information and protection for wellbeing.

### Salween River Contamination Research

In November, water testing in the Salween River revealed concerning contamination levels, posing risks to communities relying on it for fish and water. A consultation was held with community members, researchers, and stakeholders to address these issues, resulting in documented concerns, strengthened cooperation, and plans for awareness, advocacy, and mitigation. Water testing aimed to assess safety and address local worries, with the first phase in three locations in December. The ongoing research will update stakeholders once results are available.

### Protecting waterways

KESAN worked with the Karen Rivers Watch (KRW) network to organize the *International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Dams* on March 14, themed “Our Rivers, Our Future,” at Thoo Mweh Hta, where the Salween and Thaug Yin Rivers meet. About 400 villagers from the Thai-Kawthoolei border, Mutraw District leaders, SPP leaders, and Thai CSO members gathered on the Salween riverbank to protest the proposed Hatgyi Dam. Participants wore headbands and carried banners reading “Let our rivers flow free,” “No Dam,” and “We need Peace.” In October, Karen Rivers Watch’s network meeting brought members together to collaborate on river protection and advocacy, as well as share updates on environmental education, dam campaigns, and transboundary river contamination. KESAN participated in these activities as part of the Save Salween Network, raising awareness on dam impacts after the earthquake, and discussing ways to enhance community resilience to climate change.



Participants creating their designs on Karen cloths

KESAN’s Water Governance team also participated in multiple meetings, including coordination sessions, seminars, and events, organized by Thai and Karen CSOs on cross-border issues. The main goal was to strengthen coordination among CSOs, prevent service duplication, and facilitate resource sharing to provide more effective, timely support to children, youth, and their families, thereby promoting long-term resilience.

### Community Development along the Thai-Myanmar Border

In 2025, KESAN’s Water Governance team contributed to resilience-building in three communities – two on the Thai-Myanmar border and one village in Dooplaya District. Working closely with schools and youth, the team aimed to solidify recovery efforts of the marginalised communities that suffered from the ongoing conflict and forced displacement.

By the end of the year, 52 people, including young men and women, received vocational training in embroidery and welding, expanding their job prospects. In three communities, some families received animals for livestock raising. These animals helped some families earn money via selling their livestock, while those that kept their animals were able to improve their protein intake. Livestock income was used for household needs, food, school fees, and new animals. These results encouraged villagers to continue to raise their animals, with a total of seven pigs, six goats, and around 200 chickens across the communities. Thanks to the seeds and tools provided to Thoo Mwe Khee School, 5,600 kg of vegetables, including gourds, eggplants, mustard, and water spinach, were produced for students, teachers, and families.

# Renewable Energy Program

As we approach KESAN’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we are proud to announce the launch of our newest strategic program – the Renewable Energy Program. This Program aims to promote fossil fuel-free energy sources across Kawthoolei, and is closely collaborating with other programs to integrate sustainable energy solutions that empower Karen communities.

## Key Outcomes:

- Solar powered electrical systems started supplying energy to 2 communities in the Salween Peace Park (SPP), bringing energy justice to almost 1,000 people
- Learning opportunities for 212 students were supported through reliable energy access

## Summary of Achievements:

In 2025, KESAN, in collaboration with the SPP Governing Committee and SPP residents, rolled out pilot solar energy project in two remote villages that had long relied on kerosene lamps, candles, and small diesel generators for basic energy needs. The renewable energy project brought significant change to almost 1,000 villagers by installing solar power systems, securing energy rights, and strengthening local people’s self-reliance on more environmentally sound, locally produced energy sources.

Renewable energy provision has enabled community members, especially students, to participate in a wider range of educational activities (such as a keyboard music course) and has enabled people to participate in activities after dark such as studying, to advance their education. By having the chance to charge their communication devices, these isolated villages can now ensure their right to access information, allowing them to stay up to date with security alerts and other key updates promptly.

In total, more than 100 people’s households and critical infrastructure in the villages, such as schools, meeting places, were supplied with cleaner energy through the installation of solar panels. End-of-project monitoring showed that 96% of project participants reported that accessing electricity from a renewable energy project has improved their lives. The Renewable Energy Program team will follow up with the villagers to ensure they can maintain the systems and don’t face any challenges.

*“We can study more and do more online research thanks to having a full battery on the computer, and we can also use a projector for online classes.”*

*“We don’t need to buy fuel anymore after accessing electricity from the solar system. The fuel is expensive.”*



Using solar electricity for the Piano Keyboard Course



Online class at Karen National College at night time

## Media Program

While Karen communities continue facing constant risks due to indiscriminate military offensives that target critical infrastructure, reliable information sources and prompt access to them is key to saving lives. In 2025, KESAN's Media Program team worked to document the humanitarian situation, supporting security-update-access through radio distribution and educating the international community on the ground situation with multiple documentaries and short videos.

### Key Outcomes:

- One issue of *Thoolei Kawwei* (Karen Environmental Magazine) dedicated to the climate crisis was published
- Community radio stations provided access to vital information through locally produced news and radio programs
- 22 videos and 21 reels were published and distributed, raising awareness of Karen communities and international audiences on different issues, and reaching more than 1.5 million viewers

### Summary of Achievements:

#### Media trainings

Young Karen journalists have repeatedly shown interest in creating and sharing news back with their communities. To build the professional competencies of 25 Indigenous journalists, KESAN has facilitated 3 thematic training sessions, fostering skills in high-quality content production and selection, creative radio broadcasting, and social media management.



Taw Oo community radio station volunteers and staff preparing for a radio distribution

In the Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park (TTIP), most of the training participants were women, proactively engaged in practical exercises on producing and delivering news over radio and on maintaining radio station equipment.

#### Radio distribution and access to radio programs

Due to funding constraints, in 2025, KESAN was only able to purchase and distribute 100 radio receivers, though they are in very high demand among people. Community members from 41 villages in Mutraw and Taw Oo districts obtained radio sets. Thanks to these radios, villagers will be able to receive security updates promptly and listen to the *Voice of Thoolei Kawwei* radio stories, learning more about Indigenous culture, taboos, the use of herbal medicines and topics related to climate change. The KESAN team produced 20 radio broadcasts that local volunteers were able to transmit using two community radio stations in Mutraw and Taw Oo districts, as well as on the Karen Student Network Group's radio station. Despite the earthquake and seasonal floods, stations have been functioning properly, thanks to volunteers from the radio stations who effectively manage them. KESAN staff visited radio stations to inspect if the equipment was functioning and provided technical advice.

#### Thoolei Kawwei environmental magazine

The KESAN media team worked hand in hand with local elders, herbalists, and other community members to collect stories and news to produce the Karen environmental journal *Thoolei Kawwei* issue titled "*Climate Change is*



Training participants working on practical assignments



A woman reading Thoolei Kawwei magazine

Real: Join Our Hands to Sustain Our Future”. This Karen-language environmental magazine shines a light on how the unsustainable use of natural resources fuels climate change, creating disproportionate and unfair impacts worldwide.

### Documentaries and short videos production

KESAN is committed to sharing Karen traditional practices and community-led conservation efforts to a broader audience through video production.

In 2025, topics that were covered included water resources, including women’s role in protecting and the paramount significance of the Salween River for Karen communities. Thanks to KESAN’s media work, the wider audience learnt about the importance of bees and bamboo worms for ecosystem balance. To preserve culture and protect wildlife, KESAN documented sacred and historical sites in the Salween Peace Park and in Paw Law Su site in the Kheshorter Community Forest. The international community was able to learn more about Indigenous-led governance models thanks to documentaries about elections in the TTIP.



Villagers receiving radio at Mutraw areas

Document/ Media material	Number of copies
SPP Charter briefer	30
KAW, the indigenous Karen customary Land	30
KAD guideline handbook	1,000
Regaining control of our Land KPSN Briefer	1,500
Recognizing and promoting KWO and women’s decision-making in KNU	250
Emergency aid appeal for new IDPs Briefer	e-version
Ontology book	500
Kawthoolei Agricultural Policy	45
KESAN Annual Report 2024	50
KESAN Impact report 2024	50
Thoolei Kawwei Environmental Magazine Vol.13, issue 2	3,000
Climate policy briefer	85
Organic fertilizer manual	e-version
Soil management manual	e-version
Pest management manual	e-version
Women’s Research group story	550
Reprint of the Mushroom report from the Women’s Research Group	10

Document/ Media material	Number of copies
Reprint of the Orchid report from the Women’s Research Group	10
TTIP and SPP T-shirts	1,096
SPP calendar	2,668
Preliminary Study of Fish Richness and management in Upper Bweloklo and its Tributaries in SPP	326
Kawthoolei Climate Action Plan	250
Vinyls (wildlife protection, conservation rules, seed forum, Indigenous People’s Day etc.)	554
Briefer SPP	30
SPP, TTIP and Paw Klo Charters	270
Maps	7
Posters (youth and cultural exchange poster, Karen Revolution Day, environmental advocacy)	3,033
TTIP Primer	250
Stickers for environmental stewardship and income generation initiatives	1,230
P’Nweh Pwa and Wa Taw Wa Reh maps and rules and regulations	24



## Case study: Voice of Thoolei Kawwei

*Voice of Thoolei Kawwei* is a community media initiative that produces radio stories and short videos to share news, information, and educational content with local communities. The program focuses primarily on environmental awareness, with particular attention to indigenous rights, culture, climate change, waste management, and natural resource protection.

*Voice of Thoolei Kawwei* video and radio story formats were launched after KESAN received feedback from community members and Karen students who wanted to learn more about environmental issues and cultural traditions through other media channels beside print, since the printed versions of *Thoolei Kawwei* magazine could not reach all areas across Kawthoolei. Through this diversification, KESAN is able to reach more people across the more remote areas of Kawthoolei, as well as to the Karen diaspora abroad.

The *Voice of Thoolei Kawwei* project is a collaborative initiative- Indigenous elders share invaluable insights about the Indigenous way of life, KESAN's media team develop scripts and produce content, with local volunteers broadcasting and sharing the video and radio pieces. Content includes a variety of topics, such as environmental news and information, climate change awareness, traditional knowledge sharing, music and cultural content, health topics and youth voices.

KESAN's Media team draws inspiration from the environmental magazine *Thoolei Kawwei* to create a script that expands on the issues presented in the latest issue, with adaptations to suit the specific format of its distribution. When there is an urgent matter to cover, the team will immediately work on a piece to deliver it to the target audiences as soon as possible.

In the past, it would take a long time for the recorded audio and video pieces to reach the communities, but now KESAN's Media team can promptly send ready-to-broadcast recordings online through protected channels. With the Media team's increased presence on social media, short videos can be shared on social platforms in a timely manner, allowing the program to reach a broader audience, especially young people and other social media-based communities.

By combining community radio and digital media, *Voice of Thoolei Kawwei* helps amplify local voices, strengthens environmental awareness, supports communities in addressing environmental challenges together, and preserves the cultural heritage of Karen people.



# Advocacy and Networking

## International and Regional Advocacy

In 2025, KESAN was actively involved in the regional and international advocacy, championing the voices of the Indigenous people, highlighting the importance of preserving and scaling up Indigenous-led governance models and sharing best practices from the field.

In January and February, KESAN Land and Forest Program Director represented KESAN at the **International Funders for Indigenous Peoples Forum** in Kenya, promoting community-led natural resource governance as a basis for Indigenous territorial rights, highlighting Salween Peace Park and land revitalisation. At the **Global Confluence on Radical Democracy**, KESAN's Environmental Education Program Director shared Karen communities' struggles and the SPP as a symbol of their quest for democracy, autonomy, and self-determination.

Program Development and MEAL Officers attended the **Asia-Pacific Regional Partner Seminar** hosted by one of our anonymous donors. KESAN welcomed an inclusive review of the donor's long-term strategy and focus for resource mobilization aligned with key priorities. Representatives highlighted support areas such as expanding farmers' networks, improving seed security with research and demo plots, scaling agroecology, and backing the Karen Agricultural Department's policies.

The Women Research and Advocacy Officer attended **regional advocacy meetings and workshops in the Philippines and Laos**, sharing experiences with the Karen



*Environmental Human Rights Defenders Forum*

Women's Research Group on grassroots environmental protection, cultural preservation, and youth empowerment. These events fostered policy discussion, knowledge exchange, youth leadership, and regional collaboration on social and environmental issues.

In April, the Media Program Director and the Program Development team joined **Asia Learning Exchange on Agroecology Economies**, organised by the Agroecology Fund (AEF) and co-hosted by Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI) in Bogor. At the thematic session, KESAN was invited to share our projects on strengthening food systems in Karen territories and on income-generation opportunities for women-led households.

KESAN's Land and Forest Program Director and Community-Based Livelihood Initiative Program Director participated in the **Gaia Amazonas x NTFP-EP (Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Program) South-South Learning Exchange** in May, in Palawan, Philippines. This event became an inspiring space, with Indigenous leaders from the Global South, including KESAN, sharing practices for biocultural governance, safeguarding territories, and sustaining forest livelihoods.

KESAN's Wildlife and Biodiversity Program Director provided his input during the **International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation Exchange Workshop** in the Philippines, discussing experiences of Karen people fighting for their right of self-determination and peace.

KESAN attended the **Southeast Asia Summit on Food Sovereignty** on 19-21 September in the Philippines. At the



*Asia-Pacific Regional Partner seminar*

Summit, KESAN talked about the food security situation in Karen State, its threats and coping mechanisms, such as the rice bank system, seed sharing practices and agroecology. Discussions at the Summit helped build a knowledge base on climate change adaptation practices and food systems.

KESAN's Executive Director attended the **9th Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation (APCA) Forum** in Bangkok, which strengthened cross-sector partnerships for climate adaptation and highlighted the need for evidence-based policy support. After APCA, he participated in the **IUCN World Conservation Congress** in Abu Dhabi from October 9-15, contributing to the 20-year Strategic Vision and new four-year program. The Executive Director emphasized promoting Indigenous conservation practices and involving them in scalable, collaborative solutions benefiting both people and nature.

Attendance at the **4th Asia Environmental Human Rights Defenders Forum** in Chiang Mai provided KESAN with an opportunity to engage with regional partners working at the intersection of conservation, biodiversity, and human rights. Over several days, participants discussed common challenges faced by environmental defenders and explored strategies to strengthen collaboration and protection mechanisms across the region.

KESAN's Executive Director had an opportunity to share about KESAN's work while being interviewed for an **Insight Myanmar Podcast**, the media arm of Better Burma.

## National Level Advocacy and Policy Development

Throughout 2025, KESAN Program and Management team engaged with KNU Departments, providing input on inclusive and responsive design of Kawthoolei governmental policies. In particular, Kawthoolei Agricultural Department, in collaboration with other departments, community representatives and CSOs, held a number of meetings to move forward with finalizing Kawthoolei Agriculture Policy. KESAN helped arrange two consultation meetings with the Central Livestock and Fishery Department in November and December 2025. These meetings helped continue the ongoing development of the Livestock and Fishery Policy and helped KESAN to coordinate its ongoing water resource management work with the KNU department. On a higher level, KESAN continues to be involved in stakeholder consultations regarding the launch of Kawthoolei Constitution.

To strengthen efforts in adapting to and reducing the impacts of climate change, the *Kawthoolei Climate Action Plan (K-CAP)* was developed and launched collectively in December. This Indigenous-led contribution aims to highlight the most urgent environmental and climate issues, provide actionable points to improve policy enforcement, natural resource and forest management and develop clear guidelines for engaging with large-scale agriculture and mining sectors – all to mitigate climate threats that impact Karen communities' livelihoods.



Global Confluence on Radical Democracy

## Humanitarian Support

In March 2025, after a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar, Mandalay, Sagaing, Amarapura, and the Inle regions experienced widespread destruction, including loss of lives and severe damage to homes and public infrastructure. Beyond the immediate physical damage, affected communities faced serious challenges to their day-to-day survival, including access to shelter, food, clean water, and health services. Although community members were the initial responders in SAC-controlled areas, their capacity was further strained by displacement and the overall security situation.

Coordinated work across Myanmar helped provide humanitarian assistance to diverse and hard-to-reach locations, ensuring inclusive and equitable support across communities. By providing essential materials and tools, the support enabled communities to lead their own recovery efforts and restore damaged homes and facilities more quickly. This work was carried out despite numerous logistical constraints due to conflict and infrastructural damage and limited financial resources.

Thanks to extensive long-term partnerships with CSOs, which have better access to the most affected communities, KESAN supported on-the-ground efforts to assess impacts and provide immediate support. In Kawthoolei, the greatest impacts were felt in Taw Oo and Kler Lwee Htu Districts. KESAN coordinated with the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)'s ground operations, to provide support in these two districts.

In the Taw Oo area, cash distributions benefited a total of 1,479 people, including 753 women. It allowed affected villagers to decide on their own priorities for purchases to repair their houses. In Kler Lwee Htu District, essential relief items were distributed to families affected by the earthquake, including rice, cooking oil, yellow peas, salt, pots, plates, blankets, mosquito nets, and drinking water. This aid reached 508 households, with 1,727 beneficiaries.

As central Burma was the most affected part of the country, KESAN also coordinated locally networked responses. Thanks to effective and fast fund channeling from Paung Ku and its partner organizations, KESAN provided funds for coordinated emergency actions focused on medicine provision, first-aid trainings, women's dignity and hygiene kits distribution, installation of solar systems and repair of water filtration units, and psychosocial support/ assistance for funeral arrangements for deceased community members. A total of 16,948 beneficiaries were reached with these health-related services and basic needs assistance.

KESAN coordinated with the Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation (KMF) group, which deployed and coordinated emergency response efforts in 73 villages across several areas in central Burma. 6,280 households received food and non-food items, temporary shelter materials, dignity kits, and some cash, so that the villagers can spend it on what they consider critical.



Repairing water pipelines in an earthquake-affected village



Collapsed houses in the Inle region following the March 2025 earthquake



Community members transporting solar panels for installation to the earthquake-affected communities.

## Organisational Development

KESAN staff members- despite being busy planning, coordinating, implementing and reporting on their regular work responsibilities- are always excited to join trainings which enhance their professional competencies. In 2025, KESAN teams completed eight trainings, building our institutional capacity to reach more communities in need.

In the **Visualisation in Participatory Programs (VIPP)** workshop, KESAN teams developed facilitation skills for decision-making and engagement using creative methods.

A **Participatory Action Research (PAR)** workshop helped staff learn participatory research, preserve local knowledge, and incorporate it into daily work, enriching community plans for territorial governance. Both trainings were supported by Danmission.

Thanks to SDC and DCA-supported **Financial trainings**, the KESAN Finance team received a number of practical tools to further improve financial reporting. It helped to strengthen the compliance mechanism and preparedness for external auditing.

A **Conflict Sensitivity workshop**, supported by The Border Consortium, enhanced KESAN's Livelihood Program staff's skills related to conflict analysis, risk assessment, and stakeholder engagement. A **Disaster Preparedness and Response training** improved community resilience and hazard preparedness. Both sessions promoted the development of contextual knowledge for sustainable program design and implementation.



*Visualisation in Participatory Programs training*



*Participatory Action Research training*

The DCA team also provided a practical **MEAL workshop** for the KESAN MEAL team and field staff, focused on monitoring work and the use of the Kobo Toolbox. The participants discussed potential ways of applying Kobo to measure initiative progress and long-term impact, and a number of technical challenges were clarified.

Women for Biodiversity invited 2 KESAN staff to participate in a **GEDSI training**, which allowed them to deepen their knowledge of inclusiveness and gender mainstreaming when working in conflict settings.

One KESAN staff member from the Water Governance team completed a three-week **Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute training**, supported by Earth Rights International. As a result, the team member was able to develop skills used for community legal advising, environmental impact assessments and procedural rights from experienced legal practitioners.

In 2025, KESAN added a new position - Market Technical Support Officer. This staff is responsible to promote community products such as honey, wooden bowls, durian paste, and turmeric powder, as well as developing a marketing strategy to scale up production and oversee the quality of the value-added goods. In addition, KESAN hired a Human Resource Officer, who has been fully focused on overseeing staff performance, tailoring capacity development to needs, and regularly checking in on teams' well-being. Another new position and staff member- IT Officer- was added to the KESAN team, who started working on improving staff's digital literacy and enhancing security systems in place.

## Financial Overview

In 2025, KESAN was supported by 38 funding streams from donors sharing our core values and approach, with program and operational costs totaling 82,481,346 THB (2,457,727 USD).

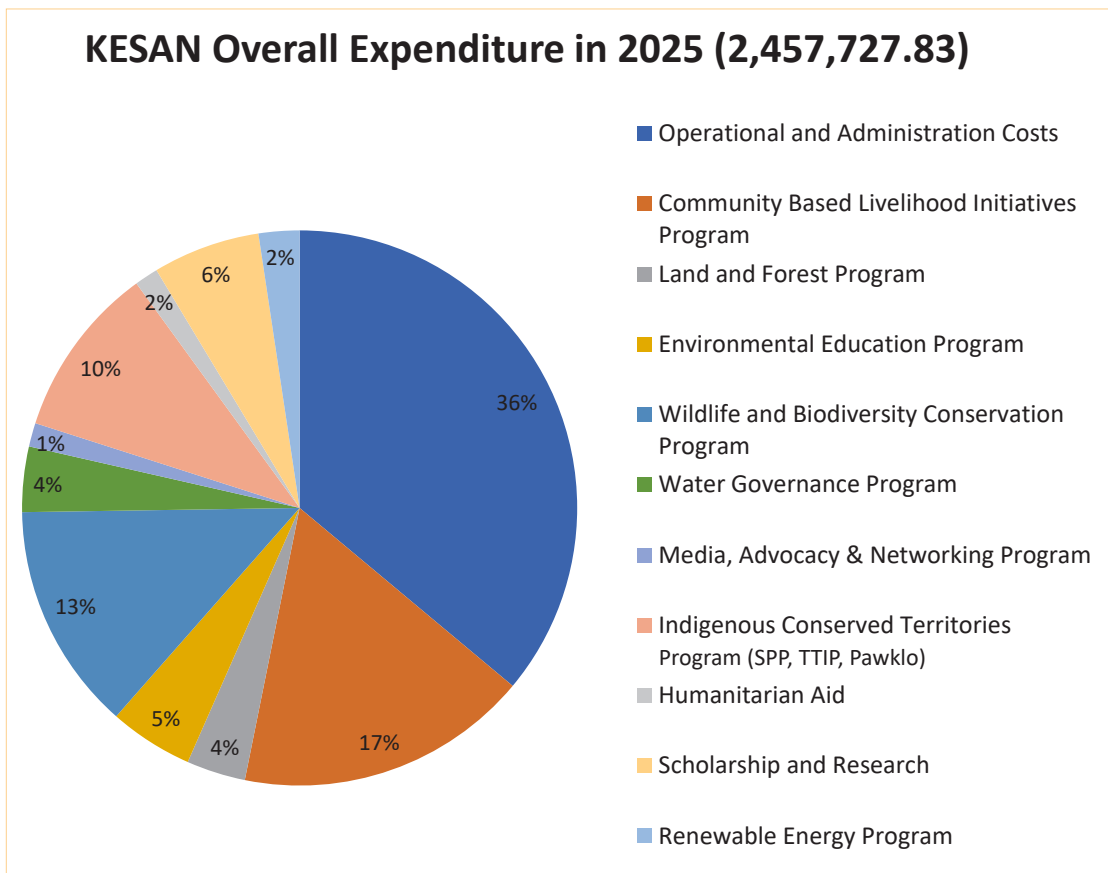
While the number of funding streams was slightly lower than in 2024 (41 in 2024), the total amount of funding rose by 14% compared with the previous year. This allowed KESAN to sustain its existing projects and scale up certain initiatives. To ensure high-quality deliverables, KESAN increased the number of staff- especially field-based staff- to ensure smooth implementation, which necessitated an increase in KESAN’s operational costs.

KESAN has been actively monitoring shifts in the current funding landscape, which, in 2025, was characterised by substantial global cuts. We focused on diversifying funding sources and advocated with donors about

the benefits and effectiveness of unrestricted ‘core’ funding. Despite being relatively well-positioned after the worldwide reductions of humanitarian and development aid, KESAN still faces significant needs and seeks. We have identified the following thematic areas which are especially in need of more support:

- strengthening Indigenous-led governance in the Pawklo Indigenous Stewardship Territory;
- strengthening inclusive ethnic and local governance structures;
- coordinating regular environmental campaigns.

In 2025, the majority of KESAN’s funds were allocated to ongoing projects and activities supported over many years by long-term donors committed to our work across multiple project cycles. KESAN appreciates its donors and individuals for their generous support to KESAN and the Karen communities.



No	Donor/ Back Donor	Program/ Org
1	Advance Myanmar	Media, Advocacy and Networking Program
2	Agroecology Fund (AEF)	Indigenous Conserved Territories Program (TTIP)
3	American Jewish World Service (AJWS)	Core Funding
4	American Jewish World Service-SSN	Save the Salween Network
5	Anonymous Donor 1	Core Funding
6	Anonymous Donor 2	Core Funding
7	Anonymous Donor 3	Indigenous Conserved Territories Program (TTIP)
8	Anonymous Donor 4	Wildlife and Biodiversity Program/Media, Advocacy & Networking Program
9	Burma Relief Centre (BRC)	Core Funding/ Media, Advocacy & Networking Program/Indigenous Conserved Territories Program (TTIP)
10	Cadasta Foundation / UK-FCDO	Land & Forest Program
11	DanChurchAid / UK-FCDO	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program/ Environmental Education/ Media, Advocacy and Networking Program
12	DanChurchAid/ CDP/ EU	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program/ Land & Forest Program
13	Danmission	Wildlife and Biodiversity Program & Land and Forest Program
14	Danmission/ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	Wildlife and Biodiversity Program
15	FORUM-ASIA	Water Governance Program
16	Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR)	Core Funding
17	Funder Learning and Action Co-Laboratory on Gender, Environmental, and Climate Justice (FLAC)	Core Funding/ Wildlife and Biodiversity Program
18	IUCN / Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE)	Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
19	Non-Timber Forest Products- Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)	Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
20	NTFP-EP	Environmental Education Program
21	Oak Foundation	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program/ Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
22	Oxfam Australia	Water Governance Program
23	Rutu Foundation	Environmental Education Program
24	Siemenpuu Foundation	Renewable Energy Program
25	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	Core Funding
26	Tenure Facility	Indigenous Conserved Territories Program (TTIP / SPP)
27	Terre des Hommes- Germany	Humanitarian Aid Support
28	The Border Consortium / UK-FCDO	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program/ Media, Advocacy and Networking Program
29	The Border Consortium / LEARN/ USAID	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program
30	The Border Consortium / NEXUS / EU	Land & Forest Program/ Environmental Education Program / Humanitarian Aid Support
31	The Border Consortium / STANDUP 3	Land & Forest Program / Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program
32	Transnational Institute	Core Funding
33	University of Copenhagen	Core Funding/ Scholarship and Research
34	Wildlife Asia / Full Circle Foundation	Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
35	Wildlife Asia / World Wide Fund For Nature	Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
36	World Wide Fund for Nature/ Danida	Indigenous Conserved Territories Program (PIST)
37	World Wide Fund for Nature/ SDC	Wildlife & Biodiversity Program
38	World Wildlife Fund/ Karen Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Agri-food Systems	Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program/Environmental Education Program

## Progress Against KESAN 2023 – 2025 Strategic Plan

This table demonstrates some highlights from the KESAN 3-Year Strategic Plan. If you are interested in receiving a more detailed Plan with achievements accumulated, please contact KESAN.

### Color Key:

Met/Exceeded Target ■

Partially met Target ■

Unable to implement ■

Ongoing Implementation ■

3-Year Target Indicator	Target for 3-year period	Cumulative Achieved
	<b>Community Based Livelihood Initiative Program (CBLI)</b>	
Support families' rice paddy farms	240	505
Support upland farmers in 9 villages to develop their upland farms	300	1,993
Establish a Fish Conservation Association	1	0, funding constraint
Establish 15 fish conservation zones	15	30
Construct 20 fish conservation zone huts	7	25
Conduct 6 fish conservation workshops	6	11
Construction of 4 roads and 1 small bridge, benefiting more than 5,000 people	4 roads, 1 bridge, benefiting more than 5,000 people	5 bridges and 4 roads, benefiting 17,976 people
21 rice bank cluster level management trainings will be held in 7 clusters	21	18
3 annual Rice Bank Association Forum meetings will be organized	3	3
<b>Land, Forest and Resource Management Program</b>		
Establish and train Community Rangers for 6 Wildlife Sanctuaries	6	6
Demarcation and titling of 10,500 family land plots in 7 districts	10,500	14,697
30 Kaw revitalized (Community consultations, participatory demarcation, and application submission to CLC)	30	57
Carry out 3 trainings to develop land and forest data management plans with KAD and CLC District level	3	2
GIS refresher training with KAD staff in 3 Districts	3	2
<b>Water Governance Program</b>		
Maintain existing relationships including with youth leaders in Daw Lar Lake and YMK areas to support the CBWG efforts	√	√
Strengthen KNU's Livestock and Fisheries Governance Department and support sustainable livelihoods (capacity building and policy advocacy)	√	√
Continue advocacy for a free-flowing Salween River through regional and international advocacy on Water Governance and supporting grassroots movements	√	√
<b>Networking, Media, and Advocacy Campaigns Program</b>		
Thaw Thi Taw Oo Indigenous Park short documentary	√	√
Short videos from local communities about Karen way of life	√	√

Publish 6 issues of Thulei Kawwei Magazine	6	4
Design and publish women's biodiversity research reports	√	√
Design and publish the TTIP Charter	√	√
1,100 radio receivers distributed to Karen communities	1.1	1.46
<b>Wildlife Conservation and Biodiversity Program</b>		
1 new ranger team established and trained	1	3
9 community ranger patrol units supported	9	23
Women led biodiversity research is strengthened and 1 report published	√	√
Local governance and community conservation strengthened in 2 protected areas	2	6
<b>Environmental Education Program</b>		
12 Climate Change Awareness Raising trainings	12	10
3 Environmental awareness raising trainings (for KESAN network organizations' staff)	3	2
2 Hta (Karen traditional poems) books	2	2
Climate change training manual	√	√
Indigenous wildlife folktales book	√	√
Case study research on community forest management and governance in SPP- factors leading to health of the forests	√	planned to begin in 2027
<b>Indigenous Conserved Areas Program</b>		
Salween Peace Park (SPP)		
Support for 1 SPP General Assembly election	1	1
3 General Assembly annual meetings	3	2
Paw Klo Indigenous Stewardship Territory (PIST)		
Complete community land protection process for all of PIST (consultations, land use zoning and demarcation)	√	√
Thawthi Taw Oo Indigenous Park (TTIP)		
TTIP Charter development, consultations and finalization	√	√
Community research on history and culture	√	ongoing
3 TTIP Annual Forums	3	2

**KESAN would like to thank its 2025  
donors and partners for their support  
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