

# Social Suffering and Coping Strategies of the Widows at Mawchi Mine in Myanmar

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**Abstract:** No one knows the complete history of the Mawchi mine situation in Myanmar. It is more than a century old since the British occupation of Burma (Myanmar) in 1830. The high quality tin and tungsten from the Mawchi mines has been exported to the world market since colonial times. Presently, Mawchi shows scars all over the hillsides from tailings where the mining operations have dumped debris over the nearby environment and has negatively affected the local people. Through reviewing of selected social science literature on mining and its impact on the communities, especially on women, this paper explores specifically the “widows’ issue”. The social exclusion and extreme deprivation faced by widows at Mawchi mine indicates wherever widows are suffering as they live in a very long term period of armed conflict, unrest political situation as well as the mining zone, they have never been visible to the public and to the policy makers or the state. Unspoken structural violence affects people differently based on various forms of social structures and it is very closely linked to social injustice (Farmer 2004; 2009). It indicates the material, cultural and gender relations that are related into gender hierarchy and the domination of patriarchal systems, through working powers in institutions as frozen factors of structural violence that are affecting widows experience of suffering and their coping strategies. Significantly, this paper challenges the stakeholders or policy initiatives both national and global that the development agenda should be addressed the painful absence of “widows’ issues” as one of the significant important issues to include women’s economic self-sufficiency, gender equality and wellbeing.

**Keywords:** social suffering, mining, structural violence, gender relations, coping strategy, Mawchi.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Myanmar (Burma) had been under direct and indirect strategies of military control about half a century. Presently, it is at the process of changing from military government to democratic government starting in 2015 and up until now there are so many challenges inside the country. The new government itself has not yet established an official mechanism to enable a comprehensive and balanced investigation into what actually happened in all corners of the country. Despite these current existing limitations, this paper will attempt to carry out the understanding of the relationship between the Mawchi mine and the widows of Mawchi mine: widows’ sufferings and their effort/strategy to cope with the existing problems throughout their life journey at Mawchi mine in Kayah (Karenni) state, Myanmar.

My working experience and interrelations with this particular group for the years 1997-2003, the qualitative research methods include; observation, oral communication, interrelation activities, interviews appeared by the widows during my preliminary fieldwork in October 2015 and May – July 2016 and data collection during October – December and April – June, 2017, brought me to answer the Mawchi Widows’ situation with why and how did numbers of women become widows? What kinds of suffering do they experience and how these suffering occur? And, how do they cope with their life situation? In doing so, the research design and methodology utilizing a qualitative research approach that refers to the collection and analysis of material that seeks to uncover meaning and to promote understanding of the experiences of the research subjects (Feuvre & Metso 2006).

The first approach is specifically designed to assemble factual information from the historical evidence and testimonies about what widows experienced and from which the violent period of human history (Mueggler 2001), and the experience of suffering itself stand as to reveal the actual situation existed (Kleinman 1992; Das 1998; Bourdieu 1999; Wilkinson 2005). The second approach places more emphasis on social structure and agency that needs to be taken into consideration as to summon how working power institutions stand as a frozen key actor of structural violence that framed the social sufferings that impact on the lives of widows. Through which relationship between object social structures such as institutions power, discourses, different fields, ideologies and everyday life coping strategies are constructed (Bourdieu 1999). Third, cultural and gender relations issue will be taken as to reveal that the “experience” of suffering from the impacts of mining operations are not gender neutral (Oxfam Australia, 2009: 7) that implies women (widows) can experience suffering the consequences of mining operations than men. Then, coping strategy will be expressed as to bring women empowerment agency in everyday life activities. It is to recognize that the incidence and severity of suffering reveals a call for the development of an analytical practice in which all related cultures and societies take shape in response to the uprooting of life that suffering visit upon people (Dikotter 2001). It also exposed the need to clarify the where and how these various kinds of suffering emerged from where social forces could also have structural risk for most forms of extreme suffering (Farmer 2009).

Using observation as the key technique that is to reveal the truth by giving full attention to widows’ everyday life words and deeds such as; listening to their whisperings, their gossiping among each others, their murmuring, their interrelation with themselves and with others, their daily activities and practices, and testimonies as a basis for promoting understanding about what actually occurred from which several spoken statements, both experience near and far observation bear witness that no one can refuse that reality existed. Through the individual and collective voices and activities of the widows it is believed that it can speak out for changing unjust forms of power structures, ending socio-political and economic violence, and breaking the chain of systematic planning towards social sufferings. And, as its belief this process will pave the way towards an acknowledgement of the existence of widows’ issues as well as a full admission about their experiences as citizens of the nation to restore the social order that was torn apart as a result of the long suffering since the mine started in 1830.

### **Mawchi Mine: Historical evidence of the Violent Period of Human History:**

Mawchi mine has been around from the time of the British occupation of Burma in 1830 and it primarily extracts tin and tungsten. It is a more than century old mine. It is said that the high quality tin and tungsten from Mawchi mines were found before the British occupation of Mawchi. Before 1830 villagers (Karen people) were excavating private soft metal and sales at Taungoo. They were using a barter system that exchanged these products for rice, salt and fermented fish for a living. This barter system reached Taungoo Town in Bago Region. Life in those days for Karen indigenous peoples were filled with joy and peacefulness (Htoo 2012).

When the British Government discovered it, they sent an Exploration Mission to the Mawchi Region. In early 1830, the British Delegation came to discuss with Karenni, Kywe Pho Gyi, a Shan Chief, namely Kay Pho Du and the first consent was made by him for Mawchi Mine production. In the years 1830-1942, the British Government monopolized the Maw Chi Mine in the British Colony; most of the mine workers were from Yunnan Province of China, and Nepal (Crozier 1994). The Mawchi tin and tungsten mines in Kayah state were the main source of tungsten in the world before World War II. Again, in 1943-1945, during the Second World War, Mawchi Mine was monopolized by Fascist Japanese. After the Japanese lost the war, the British Government again monopolized Mawchi Mine in 1945-1947. Started by 1948-1950, the Karenni state was led by Prime Minister U Nu government and run the Mawchi Mine, and from there Mawchi mine was totally under the control of the Burman military government. In 1951-1952, due to a strike of Myanmar against the English in Mawchi Mine, the British Government retreated from Myanmar. In 1952-2016, till today, the government Military is controlling the business in Mawchi Mine. In 1970-1973, one of the companies of Russia was running the business, but retreated from it due to attacks between Myanmar Government Forces and Karenni Revolutionary Forces. After then, over the years it has increased with both Burmese and Chinese companies coming into this area to mine ore.

At present, local residents and officials said the tin mines – which are monopolized by military heavyweight Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEHL) and joint cooperation with Kayah State Mining Product Company (KMPC) and Ministry of Mining no. (2) Mining. U Ye Tun Tin, manager of KMPC, was formerly a Burma Army officer, posted in the mining area under successive formal government, who then became a militia leader. He is one of the members of the

ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party. The other groups are the cease-fire Karenni National Solidarity Organization (“Kyaë’ Phyu”) owns a company called Kayah Ngwe Kyaë and Kayan National People Party (KNPP); which are also doing mining with the permission of UMEHL. Although people selected a new government, the National League for Democracy (NLD) start taking place in 2015, there is no sign of improvement due to the history of oppression by patriarchal institutions and due to current instability of political situation such as civil war heavily in the country.

The historical and empirical evidence suggests that the most suffering felt by the villagers living in Mawchi mine was the forcible martial law especially appearing in the “four cuts” policy conducted by government army forces since the Burman military took over the power in 1948. There was a remarkable incident which happened in 1948 when Burmese military entered churches in Karen villages around Mawchi mine area and murdered more than eighty Karen Christian worshippers (Crozier 1994:25). The Karen national insurrection burst out immediately. The battles frequently broke out; murder has been going on every day. This ambush life situation made some local people move to another place, some find ways to rescue themselves and go to refugee camps; some are being internally displaced over sixty years, while some are still remaining there and working in traditional ways. Traditionally, the fighting stops for the paddy-planting with no schooling, no hospital running. Then the Mawchi mines’ area situation was totally turned into complex and multifaceted problems under the overall control of the Burmese Army and then to the military government and different armed groups. Subsequently, local people totally became the scapegoats among those groups and their lives entered into severe hardship.

The latest and the most severe of crisis in Mawchi is the result of the regime's 1996 forced relocation campaign. This program led to the total collapse of agricultural production in the area and the subsequent collapse of the rest of the social structure and economy. All the villagers from the surrounding areas were forced to move into the town of Mawchi. The cessation of agricultural production brought about a massive increase in the price of food and a large increase in unemployment. Most people are more or less constantly hungry and spend their days scrounging around looking for food. All the children in the Mawchi mines are engaged in helping their parents obtain food - collecting birds, worms, frogs and insects to eat. Moreover, the collected rice was burnt occasionally by military troops. During that time, men were killed indiscriminately by both sides of the armed groups while the others died by exposure to toxic chemicals. They were affected with bloody coughing where one couldn't find any medicine, no food. Torture involved loss of eyesight; nails pulled out, and knife attacks. Where there were also torturing and killing happening every day in Mawchi we could say structural violence and direct violence are highly interdependent including racial violence, gender violence, hate crimes, state violence, terrorism, and war” (Gilligan 1997).

On the other hand, because of the mining works the ruins of Mount *Ler Bwa Koh* (rock-mountain), rivers and deforestation appear, and the natural beauty around the Mawchi town is also damaged. Local people started to encounter environmental problems. The water dried up, the creeks became narrow, deforestation and landslides occurred year by year. This situation has led not only to environmental destruction but also the climate changed and the situation has brought the local people into more severe hardships throughout their whole life. Since then, a lot of social impacts, such as health problems caused by tin mining, pollution from mining waste, drinking water problems, and health problems downstream from mines, dangerous living conditions and safety of mine workers, painful early deaths of mining workers, gender disparity, and landslides have occurred. All these are what the local people have to encounter their whole life and especially it seriously affected them and also by preventing them from meeting their basic needs (Galtung 1969, 2007).

Consequently, the mining works for years have left deep scars all over the hillsides and caused landslides every year. All nearby environment suffered from water pollution, damaged roads, health issues, lack of basic needs, security and safety needs, and, all villages surrounding there are now in critical condition. All the issues occurring in Mawchi mine are likely to have been the result of acts of political decision and social conditions that break down and destroy human life (Kleinman 1997); where there exactly social suffering could be found as the result of what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems (Kleinman, Das & Lock (eds.) 1997).

The local people, despite working there for many years, have seen no signs of development in the area. The local people are still living in poverty, and have suffered from several impacts of the mines. There has been no improvement in health, education, communication, transportation and economy. It is needs to be clarified that where and how these various kinds of suffering emerged from where social forces could also have structural risk for most form of extreme suffering (Farmer 2009).

## 2. SOCIAL SUFFERING AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

In relation to social suffering and structural violence; “structural violence” refers to systematic ways in which social structures harm or disadvantage individuals and in it people hurt and suffer. Structural violence is restrained and it’s often invisible, and usually no specific person can be held responsible. Johan Galtung identified that the term “structural violence” as a form of violence which may harm people by social structure or social institution and also by preventing people from meeting their basic needs (Galtung 1969). Paul Farmer has given a clear point on structural violence, noted that: “it is the social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. And, these kinds of arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people. In it neither culture nor pure individual will is at fault; rather, historically given and it is often economically driven processes and forces conspire to constrain individual agency” (Farmer 2009).

One key aspect of structural violence is that it is often hard to see. For example, Farmer mentioned that when a baby dies of malnutrition, or from a vaccine-preventable disease, who should we blame? The accumulated effects of structural violence on an individual will necessarily mean less health and shorter life. Again, the phrase “constraint agency” used by Farmer is being a challenge to the notion that structural violence may be manifested in obvious forms, such as civilians killed by civil war or unstable political situations, bombs, landmines or infants that die from preventable diseases.

Based on the findings, my consideration upon some of the subtle effects of distributed harm visited upon the local people at Mawchi mines took place during the years 1972-1996. Empirical evidence has shown that in Mawchi mining 40% of men died prematurely it was generally due to the severer political situation, and mining works. Here, I would like to cover information that is based on my preliminary fieldwork survey that has implications for the invisibility of “structural inequality” of social arrangements that draw individuals and local people into harm. In fact, most men died due to the mining works and lack of medicine in the hospital in that Mawchi area. This indicates to us the unequal arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization powers or state and other institutional powers; they are violent because they cause injury to people in which human rights violation is situated and social suffering is rooted. Now, let us turn to the concept of various structural harms. The structural inequality is embedded in Mawchi mines as in the political and institutional powers because during that period of times, since the colonial powers in Mawchi mines, and until 2010 not all the local people had citizens’ identity cards although they were born there. Since a person did not have citizen ID (National Registration Card) according to the state martial law he or she couldn’t travel to the city, above all, he or she cannot own anything, for this, one can easily lose his or her land and livelihood because he or she fell through the cracks in a state law or under dictatorships’ ruling and no government services reached them. For example; politically and historically; the “four cuts” policy that was introduced for ethnic cleansing brought all communications break down into Mawchi mines and all Karen villages in the hill sides. My personal experience evidence found that it took one day in order to reach Mawchi and one had to pass by more than 20 military forces brigades inquiries or checkpoints between Loikaw and Mawchi in Kayah state. Considering the mining situation, men mining workers died earlier than average due to the lack of medicine and lack of food and women remained in the community as widows. All these situations identified the “constraint of agency” that challenges the notion in which structural violence is manifested in it as “structural inequality”. These structural inequalities lead to harm toward people and make them suffer their whole life.

Consider that all Karen people in Mawchi surrounding area lived in an area of insurgency, fleeing from civil war, crying for the dead every day because of the trauma. The fact is that if they received the same social advantages that the other citizens did then they would not have to transform themselves as refugees or internally displaced people, and men at Mawchi mines would not die as early as they did and women would not have to remain as widows taking every single role to carry out their family life situation. Here, fleeing to escape from an unjust situation and especially men’s early death and women remaining as widows is as violent as people can get in Mawchi mines. Another incident was that numbers of Karen villagers in Karen state and Mawchi area were illegally dispossessed of their homes, paddy fields, and all plantations burned by the government military troops anytime everywhere in Karen hillsides. Women in Mawchi villages were hard put to find food from their surrounding villages. And, consider that specifically in Mawchi mines, men had to serve and stand as frontier soldiers for the military troops, men were tortured and killed by both sides of military and non-state armed groups but mostly by military troops, while other men died from exposure to toxic chemicals, then women remained as widows and struggled with their long life journey in dire straits. Following these, could we say that is it enough to blame the military troops or non-state armed groups or is it to blame the colonials that left mining works into

chaos? Of course, one can blame the military troops or any non-state armed groups or colonials but the factors that structural violence or other state powers that are committing violence against the civilians is undeniable that do harm to people.

Consider when the land is shaking from explosives while one is operating the mining that forces the local people to move and every time when a landslide occurs and crushes the houses, to whom do we have to assign blame? Could we say that is it the fault of the local people that they are stupid enough staying there even though they are alarming to move from their home land? Structural violence here is often invisible and often has no one who can be held responsible that is to hold that behavioral violence and structural violence can interlink. As Dikotter described; all these different forms of human suffering tended to bring tools of critical analysis to bear upon the potential for the moral character of society to be exposed through the incidence and severity of suffering (Dikotter, 2011).

### **Gender, Mining and Environment Issues:**

The concept of gender here will convey the differences between women and men within a particular context in which gender differences that caused different effects on women and men will be examined. From which the relationship between widows' suffering and gender and mining will take place as to look at mining as the main factor that causes a destruction of widows' lives in this context. While considering the conditions of men mining workers in Mawchi, the empirical evidence has shown that men mining workers died from exposure to toxic poisons or landslides by the operation of the mine, mining appeared to be a form of exploitation where there are very bad working conditions which destroyed people's lives. And, this mining position stands as an institutional power that caused damage to family life, creates uncertain life situations leading to displacement of families and ultimately destroying nature that changed people's life cycles until people are not able to survive. The situation in which the proposed solutions to the problems generated by mining operations frequently fail to adequately address the needs of women, which are often quite different from those of men. Because through this, women especially "widows" appear as the one of the most affected who have to go through these as a heavy burden. Men would also suffer for sure as they are mining workers, while on the other hand women are the most affected as they have to take all responsibility for the kitchen, for their children and for the family income. For men, they died and they no longer need to suffer, but for women, they have to suffer and struggle to make the family survive.

The empirical evidence has shown that since the beginning, mining separated men and women; men mostly work inside the mine, while women have to take domestic works without pay. For this, the separation of labor in mining works created complexity where widows have to suffer double workloads as they have to do domestic works and struggle for income. Such kind of situations indeed represent mining works as serious obstacles to policy makers, structural powers, and affected communities interested and the industry's negative impacts especially on women's lives around the world (Nash 1979). Through a gender lens displays how such a situation would be very hard for those women who always perform the domestic works and never have a chance to enter into mining works to have to take double workloads and carry on all work after their husbands died.

Moreover, the cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity frequently play as an important social concept where women and men learn their behavior and roles from society. These differences are mostly reflected in roles, responsibilities, access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions, views, etc. that are held by both women and men. For example, the patriarchal culture, political culture that marginalizes women's life in Myanmar may produce male (military, father) has the power to shape gender roles in Myanmar society. The visibility of a patriarchal culture, the fundamentalists' idea and the lack of women in it may reinforce the perception that women should take on submissive social roles. The presence of the man is evident in every level of power, and in every part of the government administration level.

The social norms, like many other phenomena, are the unplanned, unexpected result of individuals' interactions. This has been covered; and the customary rules that govern behavior in societies have been extensively overwhelming women life situation; function in different cultures (Geertz 1973) and motivate people to act. Such norms create gender stereotypes where there is usually a simplified and standardized conception or image concerning the typical social roles of male and female, both domestically and socially. These are beliefs held about characteristics, qualities, and activity-domains that are "supposed" appropriate for men and women. In Myanmar, generally and traditionally, typical characteristics for women are piety, submissiveness, and domesticity, while authority, and social behavior, are traits commonly held by men.

They are influenced by the social ideologies and economic model held at a certain period of time accordingly, changing, even at times reversing, with every significant social transformation.

Undeniably facts are manifested that since the institutional behavior is informed by presumptions of appropriate and necessary behavior for men and women, their actions, their interactions, and the often catastrophic results of their policies cannot be separated from the social context that frames them. For example, stereotyping is putting a label on people or things. A stereotype is a simplified or fixed image of all members of a culture or group based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender or national origins. When we stereotype people, we prejudge them. We assume that all people in a group have the same trait; we label them and put them into molds. This implies that structure can be so rooted in masculinist presumptions that even were women in charge of these structures, they would retain the core characteristics that many feminists and progressive men find troubling and it constitutes an important base for understanding the asymmetries in masculinized labor markets such as mining in countries around the world (Salinas and Gianna 2014).

Empirical evidence suggests that all the sufferings, the life coping strategies from severe hardship situations, bitterness of life situations in Mawchi indicate that women are unjustly treated by different authoritarian institutional powers, which specifically means patriarchal institutions and men domination, create harm to them. It is because throughout history, evidence suggests that the persons who hold on to this institutional power in this particular context situation are all men; that brings us clear understanding that directly or indirectly affects and impacts of mines that have brought to widows' lives. All these can be seen in the workings of power in the institutional arrangements; the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making powers across genders in mining areas, and the types of gender differences and inequalities existing in the mining sector.

#### **Widows' Coping Strategy and its Relation to Social Suffering:**

Indeed, mourning or grieving a loved one is a deeply painful process, but it is a continuing process or process of change (Turner 1957; Donahue 1993). This is because a positive model of suffering has a redemptive role to play in human life experience when he/she tries to cope with any situation; in which the life history and experience of people illustrate that how people take issues as to overcome difficulties that enter into their lives and in doing so, people are not that good and not bad; they are in difficult and hard situations but people are still trying to find ways to cope with bad situations (Smith 1977). Indeed, the bereaved wives may experience a range of emotions such as bitterness, sadness, anxiousness, weariness, anger, shock, denial. While on the other hand, their activities through spiritual interaction, peer group gathering and encouraging gives them the energy to cope with their new life. Above all the varying degrees of emotion, the common denominator of Mawchi widows that makes them to be somewhat unusual is that they have the ability to make a positive decision in order to respond to their suffering; which is they let their emotional control be a guiding way to move on with the intentional and motivated capacity to act (Kleinman 1992).

The idea here is that ordinary people's everyday life behavior and activities could be identified as their strategy for negotiating space of power relation not through opposition mode but through their everyday political behavior. A number of researches strongly suggest that people over the world have been trying to react in negotiation activities as power relations through different appropriate strategies from where powerless people are able to show the "space of power relation" (Chafing 2004). How could powerless people or sufferers use coping strategies of everyday life behavior as a negotiating space of power relation? Here, I present a look at the sufferers as active actors as they are using their own strategy as a contesting meaning of power relation in which it would articulate that "no matter how powerless you are, you can be a good actor".

Firstly, the empirical evidence revealed that as long as widows have no chance to enter into mining works, Mawchi widows can empower themselves through a space by showing their contesting meaning and strategies in choosing global and local markets or black market in selling the tin and tungsten (Lead) that they are collecting from the soil-wastes that are flowing from the mining sites through the river. This is by where cultural politics or cultural strategies emerged to show that this group of widows can empower themselves through a space, which is called "space of power relation" (Chafing 2004).

Second, the historical evidence has shown that whenever the collected rice was burnt occasionally by the military troop in Mawchi mines area women/widows were the main persons who had to find daily food for the family while most men were tried to escape from the porters' mission conducted by the military troops (porters' mission means forced labor by

the Myanmar military to carry military equipment). “We are not afraid any danger would happen to us in the jungle because we know how to deal with the jungle life... above all we just know that we have to find food for our children to survive... it took at least three days and nights walking in order to get the main food rice” said by the widows group (Preliminary fieldwork October 2015). Moreover, whenever the authoritative persons are more recently trying to take over the Mawchi mines several times and various kinds of social problems may occur any time in this mining area, this situation makes some people to move away from their own land. What the widows’ group used to do in this situation was that they gather the villagers, conducting meeting, and encouraged the villagers, then get the villagers’ signatures and they sent it to the respective persons, then they go to the river sites and work as usually as they do that reveals they protest against naturally. Such situation reveals that widows are still strong and they are considered not mere victims to these mechanisms of control, even though they are facing severe hardship in their daily life activities and program performance networks provide them with the social, material, and emotional support to survive the unstable situation elsewhere (Lee 1997).

The idea is that how people’s consciousness of suffering alters when a dominant cultural narrative of suffering is subject to significant change; it is not only how suffering is understood and managed, but also to show how do people try to deal with it as it is subjectively felt. With this concept in mind, I submit, although humans may be powerless and they may seem to be very heavily laden which let them suffer from severe hardship by dominant power of various fields, not all individuals are reacting the same way accordingly. They may find a suitable way for themselves to survive instinctively. That means “people are able to think”; their specific efforts show as the way in which people could employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. It also indicates that widows are performing not only for money to survive but also for their dignity and integrity to be someone or something special as human beings. Preliminary fieldwork suggests that the most important strategies for the powerless persons are in showing their “power through performance” (their daily life works & activities performance), and their perception over: “this is our land: we were born here and we will die here” said by a 67 year old widow named Naw Hsardu Gaw and consistently supported by the widows group. It is clearly implied that widows could identify themselves that they are ruling in their own way. “Every person is able to give meaning to his/her suffering”.

Third, a number of research backgrounds strongly suggests that religion plays the most important role in coping and the subjective importance of religion strategy (Huguelet et al. 2009; Yurdakul and Atik 2016; Borrás et al. 2007). While some research evidence shows strong links between religion and the attitudes toward rebellious actions that indicate that religious practices and religious attendance are associated with the probabilities of participating in a protest, signing a petition as strategies against injustice or harmful regulations (Motta 2005). Preliminary surveys and observation of the Mawchi mine situation clearly show that religion is very important in providing meaning to the widows’ lives in Mawchi mining areas, especially in coping with everyday life difficulties, in giving meaning to these difficulties, in complaining what their sufferings to God, in gaining control, or in obtaining comfort. For example; an art of religion here, in “widows’ religious belief, practices and activities as coping strategies” can also serve as the interest of power; because my observation brought me that whenever they pray they complain against the power holders through whispering to God and asking God to defeat them, they ask God to speak to the power holders’ heart and mind to not discriminate against them or to consider for the poor and the needy. This could also be focused on “institutional (social and political) tendencies expressed in their religious practices that are showing correlation with problematic structural tendencies in which they are dealing. Their daily life activities and strategy implied the appropriate emotional reaction to the world in its infinite variety that provides them with schemes of perceiving the world they live. On the other hand, ways of solving suffering by worshiping God as to reduce their suffering shows that people have different rationality strategies as they are trying to find ways of solving in order to stand up (Spiro 1960). The ensured condition happening here is that powerless persons cannot engage in politics and it’s about powerless people articulating their power; a different form of power, a different form of life (Wittgenstein 1971, 1953). It is sure that people may choose a different kind of power through whispering to God through prayer and for them to show how “prayer” functions as a rational strategy to solve suffering. The powerless people may not have any voice or any chance and they may also have no rights to fight against anything but they might probably have their own rights; own identity and dignity to hold on to and they may find ways to alleviate their suffering through worshiping God and through talking/asking and praying to God for them to reduce their suffering. All kinds of coping strategies of widows reveal as to invest one’s own conscious effort, so as to solve personal and interpersonal problems in order to overcome and to try to control, minimize or tolerate stress and conflict or suffering that they have encountered that are appeared as the strategy of powerful (De Certeau 1984, 2002).

### 3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Historically, it is revealed that “Mining”; as one of the ancient activities, has a “troubled” history; filled with numerous disruptions of the pre-existing socio-political systems (Wood 2008). It is where various objects and different institutional behavior powers are embedded in it (Seager 1993; Rocheleau; Thoman-Slayter; Wangari; 1996). It is simply indicated that the mining itself produces problems and difficulties to those people and gives harm to them. In fact, evidence from researchers and scholars provide us with information that people’s pain and miseries are caused and conditioned by different fields of society (Bourdieu 1999), shaped and expressed through material and cultural links (Seager 1993) and the multifarious life worlds where moral, emotional, social, political sides of experience intersect (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Das 1998; Kleinman 1996), and it could also shift in political economy that alters experience (Scheper-Hughes 1992).

The phenomenon of “suffering” may have a widespread meaning; it is factual, existing in different ways through individuals’ experiences in which it is rooted in different contexts (Bourdieu 1999; Kleinman, Das and Lock 1997; Scheper-Hughes 1992). By looking at the relationship between the premature death of mining workers and the widowhood experience suggested that the phenomenon of suffering that appears in widows’ daily life experiences at Mawchi mine, their stories and their daily life struggle to overcome all forms of social suffering which has not emerged by itself. Instead, it is related to the major political and social cultural narratives that stand as a driving force where structural violence appeared and existed. These kinds of suffering first shifted across historical periods, altering the experience of widows which gives harm to the widows’ lives and causes them to suffer.

First, “mining” stands as the main object that created major socio-political-economy instability, which is harmful to human rights. Through which corruption entering into people's life cycle world prevents them from attaining their basic needs. Where there are human rights violations, corruption could be found elsewhere in every field that brings dehumanization which affects poverty and immorality. This was happening mainly through the military, different armed forces, different institutional powers which is being strongly rooted in and influenced by the corruption of the colony associated with the authoritarian persons (Crozier 1994) that is related to capitalism (Braudel 1985). The interrelationship between the mining works and unequal development process represents a demonic destruction of nature and drastic changes in human communities, and causes war and death; displacement of families and ultimately destroying nature and problematic relationship with economic development (Lahiri-Dutt 2010; Plumwood 2003, 1993). It is structure because it is embedded in “structural inequality” of social arrangements that created premature death to mining workers (men). It is structural violence because the notion of people’s experience of suffering is mediated through social structural oppression in which how these forms of violence such as social, political, and economic culture alter and define suffering; its origins, its purposes, and the social exclusion, the constraints imposed by inequitable political and economic structures (Rocheleau; Thomas-Slayter; Wangari; 1996), in which how widows in a specific area have to undergo and respond to it.

Second, in relation to mining, it is uttered that the needs and environmental knowledge of women has been ignored or still ignored and absent from major policies and daily project activities elsewhere. Research evidence has shown that large-scale mining affects women in indigenous communities more adversely than men (Bose 2004; Tauli-Corpuz 1997). In a particular context women (widows) have never been visible to the public to the policy makers or the state nor to the NGOs, INGO, CSOs. It has shown that mining presents serious obstacles to policy makers in which women and environmental knowledge are completely excluded from policy making decisions. This ignorance and absence agenda clearly indicates that lack of concern from community development project programs and activities for the widows; simply implied unequal development or uneven equality, moreover it could also appear as “unequal social arrangement” that is constraint imposed by both local and global agencies. Because we understand that this is a global environmental crisis where the material and cultural links between gender hierarchy and the domination of the natural world existed from where the personal interaction could be developed and institutional arrangement could also be transformed into non-exploitive, nonhierarchical, cooperative relationships (Seager 1993). Therefore, it is to present that the painful absence of a “widows’ issues” in Mawchi mines as a significant important issue that should be addressed and considered as one of the vital issues in which the needs and environmental knowledge of women should be considered in major policies and daily project activities in both national and global development agenda (The Global Widows Report 2015). That makes sense in order to support equality as to build up the world towards poverty reductions.

Third, the existing problems in Mawchi mines also provide us with gender and power issues which appeared in the patriarchal system of male dominance/power/control which is supported by and explained through culture, religion,



superstition and other ideologies (Butler 1999). These are held in place by institutions and structures including laws, policies, and practices. This has resulted in centuries of women's subordination in gender hierarchies and the strong belief in unequal gender relations as the "natural order of things." But, not only the patriarchy is just one power structure in society, but also there are other structures of domination or power structures in society. These may include power structures based on ethnicity, sexuality, age, social status, culture, religion, etc.

Additionally, widows' ability of their own capacity building appeared through their daily life coping strategy proved that it eliminates or hides the devaluing of women's ability and to bring women empowerment agency in every level of activity, and it is to express how cultural hegemony (Gramsci 2000) works. It is expressed a culture in which women are segregated from men, from any power institutions through the practice of everyday life strategy that imply gender/women empowerment could be seen and recognized elsewhere. Because unlike an army with weapons or a political system backed up by a written constitution, the power of cultural hegemony lies in its invisibility; all culture resides within human's mind itself (within us) (Morton 2007). Widows in Mawchi mines have become the evidence that "administration and management of everyday life strategies are self-segregating, setting itself up as a barricaded insider by adaptation to the environment; which has been created by the strategies of the powerful" (De Certeau 1984, 2002).

Finally, the study of Social Suffering and Coping Strategy of Mawchi widows is calling for all women and men, alarming all INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, and it is especially challenging for the new government that must be involved at every stage of efforts to reassert the rule of law and rebuild Myanmar societies through transitional justice. The needs for Rights, Equality, Justice, and Security must be addressed and human rights must be protected.

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