Media Release From Phan Foundation

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 **2016 Padoh Mahn Sha Young Leader Award Goes to Sa Thu Hlaing Win of Irrawaddy Delta**

The Phan Foundation is pleased to announce the winner of 2016 Padoh Mahn Sha Young Leader Award, is Sa Thu Hlaing Win of the Western Pwo Karen Culture and Literature Group (WPKCLG).

The Padoh Mahn Sha Young Leader Award is given annually to outstanding young leaders and comes with $2,000 grant to support their work.

Sa Thu Hlaing Win is one of the founding members of Western Pwo Karen Culture and Literature Group, and is very active in the Karen Community in South Korea, where he now lives.

Sa Thu Hlaing Win returns home whenever he can and in 2015, he played a leading role in establishing the Western Pwo Karen Culture and Literature Group.  He began research to identify villages that didn’t have Karen literature teaching and then initiated a Karen literature study program by organising summer schools including curriculum of Pwo Karen teaching, text books and other school materials and financial support for teachers. By the end of 2016, he and his group had successfully provided Karen literature and culture training to 3,000 students from 60 schools across 13 townships in Irrawaddy Delta region.

 Mahn Kenneth Moe, Board member of Western Pwo Karen Culture and Literature Group, who nominated Sa Thu Laing Win said, “In Irrawaddy Delta, a place where our Karen martyr Padoh Mahn Sha was born and also a place where the culture, tradition, language and literature of the Karen people is in danger of being lost, I believe that through the work of Sa Thu Hlaing Win, this can be prevented. Although Padoh Mahn Sha is gone, there are remarkable and intelligent young people like Sa Thu Hlaing Win, who is working so hard to inspire new generation.”

 In addition, through WPKCLG, young people are able to come together, learn and speak Karen language, be educated about Karen history, and help preserve Karen tradition and culture.

 Sa Thu Hlaing Win said, “For giving me this award, it means giving the award to Irrawaddy Delta and youth of Western Pwo Karen. I am so thrilled and honoured to receive this award. I would like to use the award money to support summer schools for Karen literature training. I would like to thank the organisers of this award for recognising Karen in Irrawaddy Delta, especially the preservation of national spirit among Karen youth in the region.”

 The award will be presented at the memorial service of Padoh Mahn Sha to mark the 9th anniversary of his assassination in Pantanaw, Irrawaddy Delta on 14 February 2017. The event is organised by Padoh Mahn Sha’s family and Karen community in Pantanaw, where a memorial statue of Padoh Mahn Sha will be unveiled.

“We are very proud to have a remarkable young Karen leader like Sa Thu Hlaing Win, who refuses to let the ethnic identity of Karen people die, especially in Irrawaddy Delta. Despite many years of oppression from central government, the culture and literature of Western Pwo Karen is still alive because of hard working people like Sa Thu Hlaing Win and the Karen community there. This is exactly what my father Padoh Mahn Sha would want to see”, said Slone Phan, Director of Phan Foundation and the youngest son of Padoh Mahn Sha.

The Phan Foundation was founded by the four children of Padoh Mahn Sha, former General Secretary of the Karen National Union, and his wife Nant Kyin Shwe, in their memory. The Foundation has four main objectives: to alleviate poverty, to provide education, to promote human rights, and to protect Karen culture. In meeting its objectives, the Phan Foundation focuses particularly on young people, encouraging and supporting a new generation of grassroots activists who works to help their communities.

For more information and for interview please contact:

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