

Women Empowerment and Development Association

WEDA

JANUARY - JUNE 2011 REPORT

Human
Resources
(p.2)

Accounting
(p.2)

Income
Generation
Activities
(p.3)

Special
Events
(p.3)

Women
Empowerment
Workshops and
Trainings (p.4)



The FED Women Program is carried out under the denomination of **WEDA** (Women Empowerment and Development Association). Established in 2006, WEDA has become a focal point among the Burmese women of the area, offering counsel and support and delivering different activities to promote women empowerment. WEDA aims at providing education and skills to Burmese migrant women in order to empower them. At the same time, it intends to protect Burmese women against domestic violence and improve family well-being. To this regard, WEDA offers different types of vocational training courses, giving to the women an alternative to obtain incomes to support their families. In addition, the Women Center organises workshops about health education, family planning, domestic violence, and women rights.

In this report, you can find a narrative of WEDA's activities from January to June 2011.



Human Resources:

As of June 2011, 29 women in the Phang Nga province are members of WEDA . Yet from all the members, only 2 women work full time in the center, managing the center, and coordinating and conducting the income generation activities of WEDA. The rest of the women participate in the center's life according to their time availability and necessities. For many of the women, the center is just a meeting point to share experiences and look for advice, and they only come when they need help or to offer their support to other women. Many of the women that through the years have belong to WEDA move to other regions in Thailand or go back to Burma after receiving different trainings, taking with them new skills that will help them in their future lives. International volunteers are also joining WEDA to promote women rights among the Burmese communities.

The WEDA center is located in Khuk Khak, about 1 kilometer north from the FED main office. The center has 4 rooms and a kitchen area: a main room by the building front door that works as a shop and meeting room, one room with sewing machines where the women sew the clothes, one office, and a small laundry room. The center has available one laundry machine and 7 sewing machines.

Accounting:

| | Income | Expense | Balance |
|-------------|--------|---------|---------|
| End of 2010 | | | 29833 |
| January | 10414 | 15082 | -4668 |
| February | 13143 | 10915 | 2228 |
| March | 8500 | 4766 | 3734 |
| April | 19731 | 11341 | 8390 |
| May | 9765 | 3753 | 6012 |
| June | 4309 | 4563 | -254 |
| Total | 65862 | 50420 | 45275 |

During the high season (January till April), incomes are generally higher than during the low season (May and June), as WEDA can sell its handicrafts and provide various services to tourists.

WEDA's income by activities:

- laundry services: 8.6%
- sewing services: **39.25%**
- jewelery selling: **40%**
- others: 12%

WEDA's expenses by activities:

- laundry services: 6.5%
- sewing services: 10.9%
- jewelry services: 26.45%
- others: **56.6%**

Other expenses include transportation costs, preparation costs for events such as International Women Day, Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday, etc.

Income - generating activities

The main activities for income generation currently developed at the WEDA center are:

- Laundry and ironing local service
- Tailoring and sewing of clothes
- Hand-making of jewelry
- Hand-making of bags and small handicrafts
- Services to the Burmese community

The laundry and ironing service is only developed at the center by the women working full time there, and all the benefits serve to sustain the center. This service is used by the local community, although it is planned to be extended and also be offered to the numerous tourists that visit and stay in the area. While during the high season the center can do up to 10 laundries per week, this number decreases to 2 in the low season. During the first semester of 2011, laundry contributed to 8.6% of WEDA's incomes.



The tailoring and sewing service is mainly aimed at the Burmese local community. Women with sewing skills and highly involved with WEDA, work on this service using the sewing machines at the center, and are paid according to what they make (1/3 of the product benefit). Part of the benefit from the clothes (2/3) goes also the center. Besides making and fixing normal clothes, they also make traditional Burmese clothes for special events (weddings, festivals). Additionally, WEDA is in charge of tailoring and sewing all the uniforms for the students of the FED learning center, which importantly contributes to the incomes of the center. All the sewing services together bring the 39.25% of the incomes of the center.

The hand-making of jewelry and small handicrafts is aimed to make products that can be mostly sold to the tourist visiting the area, although local people frequently buy them too. The advantage of these activities is that once the skills are learned, the women can work on the products at home, thus combining it with their family duties and avoiding transportation problems. The benefit of these activities is shared between the center and the woman that makes the product (1/3 to the woman, 2/3 to the center). Women are provided at the center with the training and the material to make the products. Some training are also carried out directly in the communities. Indeed a training was carried out in Bang Niang from March to June 2011 once a week. When a woman finishes a product, and if the quality is good, WEDA buys it to be sold at the center or in one of the other 2 selling points at the area (cf the Community Craft Shop in Bang Niang). The additional benefit from selling the product is invested in buying more material and supporting the center. Jewelry sales account for 40% of the incomes of the center, while handicrafts sales barely balance the investments on material..



The women from WEDA frequently offer different *services to the community*, both Burmese and Thai, like food catering for events, festivities and wedding organization, or rental of clothes. These services only yield 6% of the incomes of the center, but highly contribute to women interaction and networking. Not to mention that it can influence positively the relations between the Thai and Burmese communities.

Special Events



International Women Day was the occasion to gather women from surrounding Burmese communities and inform them about their rights as migrants as well as women. During the event, the participants joined an educative quiz related to labor rights, health rights and women's rights. They also watched a documentary on women's empowerment programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Throughout the evening, women were invited to speech about their problems and share their experiences. Other FED staff were happy to provide the women with important information and help.



Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday which is also known as Burmese Women's Day was celebrated on June the 19th. The celebration took place in the Khuk Khak Thai school and included informative speeches, dancing, singing and comic representations. In cooperation with the education team, WEDA first provided tea and snacks to the audience. The women of WEDA also launched the Burmese traditional "spoken word" singing and took part in the comic dancing. Finally Wai Phyo gave a little presentation on what WEDA is doing in the community.



Women empowerment workshops and trainings

Offering vocational training courses is one of WEDA's primary goals, principally because increasing their income capacity is the main concern of Burmese women in the province (FED women's survey, 2009). The frequency of these courses depends on the number of women interested in them and on the cost of organization. Frequently, the main obstacles for the trainings is the cost of women transportation and WEDA's lack of visibility.

- *Sewing training* is expensive and time-consuming, therefore it has been only done twice (in 2006 and 2008) and with funding support from external

organizations. Nevertheless individual sewing training are given on a regular basis at the Women Center. Two women have been following these trainings by coming every week to WEDA since January 2011.

- *Jewelry training* has been done in two communities since January 2010, first to women working at the daily Bang Niang market, and then in Tonkamin. One to one training for simple skills is also performed at the center all the time by the women with experience.

In addition, jewelry trainings were also organized for international volunteers currently working at FED.

- *Training to make small handicrafts and bags* is developed continuously at the center, usually in small groups of women.

To reduce the costs of organization and transportation, women empowerment workshops are generally organized at the center together with the vocational training courses. Alternatively, they are sometimes organized at the different communities.

The workshops generally cover these topics:

- women health education,
- family planning,
- women rights and domestic violence

Nevertheless due to lack of funding and transportation problems, only a few of these training have been conducted

between January 2011 and June 2011. WEDA yet seeks to increase this core activity once funding get secure for July 2011. In the meantime, Women Labour Exchange are taken place at the Women Center on a monthly basis. They give the women the opportunity to exchange information and ideas while promoting networking and solidarity among them.





Among WEDA's members and volunteers:

- Wai Phyoo
- Ma Let
- Ma Mi Sei
- Aye Ho
- Thanda Maung Maung
- Ma Nie Lay
- Thia Thia Thu
- Ni Lar Win
- Laura Palomo
- Cécile Pentori
- Serena Quiroga



www.wedacares.org