

OUR WORK IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

"The empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence". (Ranjana Kumari)



The Issue...

Many women left Burma following their husbands to escape extreme poverty, civil wars and human rights abuses in their country. The countrywide economic crisis has driven women and girls throughout Burma into migrant labor. They come looking for work in Thailand, with the aim to send money back to Burma to support their parents and children who may still live there. Yet once in Thailand, most of the women cannot work legally and the only jobs they can have access to involve unsafe and hazardous conditions.

A lot of Burmese migrant women are unaware of their rights and lack crucial information on the services they could have access to. Their vulnerabilities are twofold, first as migrants and then as women. As most of them don't speak the Thai language, their employers or the people they turn to for help can easily abuse them. In addition, as women, they face even greater challenges than male migrant workers. They are generally paid less than men and more vulnerable to domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.

WEDA returns part of their proceeds to their communities in order to provide health services and additional income for struggling families.

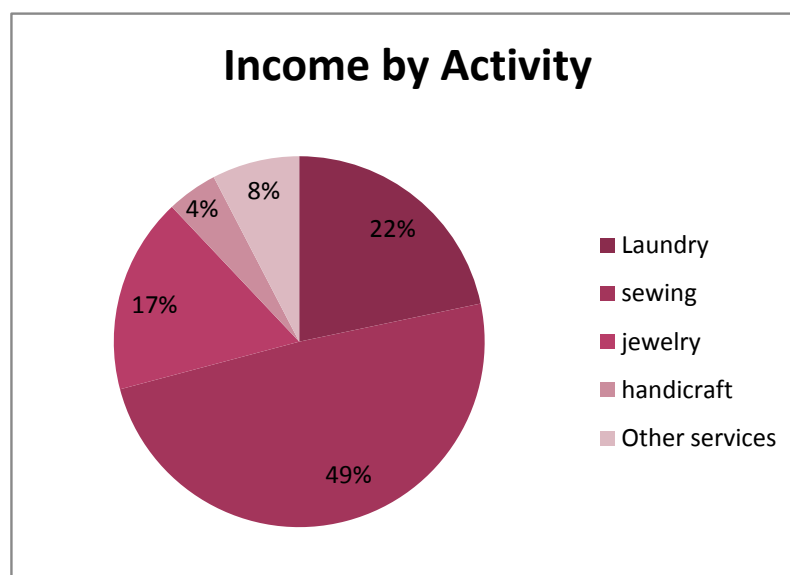
Commitment to Action...



In 2006, FED established the Women's Empowerment and Development Association (WEDA). WEDA has become a focal point among the Burmese women of the area, offering counsel and support and organizing different activities to promote women's empowerment. WEDA organizes workshops about health education, family planning, domestic violence, and women's rights. In addition, WEDA offers different types of vocational training courses, which not only give the women more employable skills, but it also offers the women a safer, more reliable alternative means to earning an income to support their families. Once women learn these working skills, they can work on these activities at home or at the center. These income-generating activities also serve to maintain the center so that WEDA can continue to operate as a self-sustained association.

Results:

- Laundry and ironing: the center has been providing laundry services for 12 customers on average per month. This service represented 22% of its income in 2010.
- Tailoring and sewing services: in 2010, this service was mainly aimed at the Burmese community. WEDA was also in charge of sewing all the learning centers' uniforms, which represents 25% of the sewing activities income. Sewing represented 49 % of the center's income in 2010.
- The hand making of jewelry and handicrafts: mostly sold to tourists. Profits from the products are shared accordingly: 1/3 goes to the women who make them and 2/3 goes back to WEDA (WEDA provides material and trainings). Jewelry sales represent 21% of the income of the center (17% for jewelry and 4% for handicrafts).
- Others services: includes food catering for events, festivities, wedding organizing, or clothes rental. These services represented 8% of the center's income.



PARTNERS IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

FUNDING

Foundation for the People of
Burma (FPB)

MEMBERS

Wai Phyoo

Thanda Maung Maung

Ma Let

Ma Lat

Ma Myint

Ma Let Let

In Gin May

Ni Wan

Moe Thi Dar Pyae

Moe Moe Ei

Daw Hla Myint

Wai Hnin Po

Ni Lar Win

Aye Ho

VOLUNTEERS

Patcharaporn Lueraj

Laura Palomo

Cecile Pentori

Zurine Santander

Women empowerment workshops & trainings:

The frequency of these courses depend on the number of women interested in them and on the cost of organizing them. Frequently, the main obstacle for the trainings to take place is the cost of transportation for the women from their communities to the center.

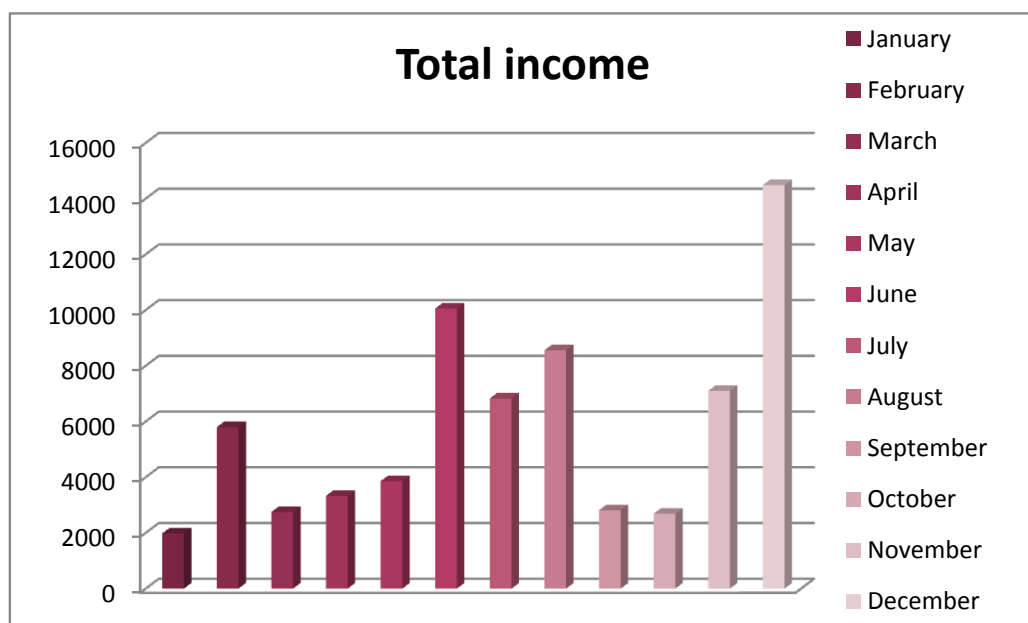
- Sewing training: As this training is expensive and time-consuming, it requires funding support from external organizations. None have been awarded in 2010 (one in 2006 and one in 2008 with 20 women each time).
- Jewelry training: two groups of women were trained to make jewelry in 2010. One to one training skills were also carried out at the center all year long.
- Training to make small handicrafts and bags took place continuously at the center. **5** women followed it in 2010.
- Training to make happy dolls was offered for the first time in November 2010, and **9** women attended it.
- Foreigner jewelry training: **8** foreign volunteers attended the jewelry training in December 2010.

Workshops covering topics such as women's health education, family planning, women's rights and domestic violence were also set up at the center and within the communities. In July 2010, two (**2**) workshops were organized, one in Bang Niang and one in Pakarang, with **20** women each time.





As of December 2010, there are twenty eight women in the Phang Nga province that are members of WEDA. From all the members, only 5 women work full time in the center, managing the center, and coordinating and conducting the income generation activities of WEDA. One of these women also lives in the center. 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. For other women, such as widows, women with babies or women suffering serious diseases, WEDA is the only place they can go to work and get financial support for their children. Through the years, many of the women that 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.



Income 93,375 bahts
 Expenses 65,460 bahts
Profit 29,833.00 bahts

Other achievements:

- WEDA was part of the organizing committee for International Women's Day (2010), and Aung San Suu Kyi's Day (2010).
- WEDA also set up its own website (www.wedacares.org) and Facebook page.
- WEDA carried out a survey in 5 different surrounding communities to assess the living conditions and needs of Burmese migrant women.