



Advanced Weaving Training – Weaving towards aspirations and dreams

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WEAVE – women has been devoted to supporting women living in the camps and surrounding Thai villages since 1990. The goal of WEAVE Fair Trade is to empower marginalized women living in the area and supporting them in making fair income in a safe working environment. This is done through the art of weaving, sewing and embroidery. By promoting the preservation of ancient traditions and heritage, the women are able to work and practice through their cultural backgrounds. By crafting beautiful pieces, women in their communities are creating the path to better opportunities, for themselves, as well as for their families and next generations.

In the week of the 10th to 14th of June, 2024. WEAVE organized an advanced weaving training welcome for the women artisans weaving in the camps. The training was initiated to enhance, refresh and boost the weaving skills of the women artisans working in the WEAVE Fair Trade program. The five-day program was filled with hard work, learning new skills, laughter and jokes. This entry is to introduce some of the artisans participating in the training, highlighting their personal dreams, goals and aspirations.



During the training, in the early morning about 20 artisans came together in the Quality Control centre of WEAVE in camp 1, or Karenni site 1. The spirits and motivation to work is high and the artisans are eager to learn. Generally the artisans are very happy when they are able to join the trainings. They want to improve their skills become expert weavers, and expand their reach in crafting different items. I found an incredible admiration when I looked at the artisans working on their crafts. The two patterns on which they were working on require focus and uttermost precision.



Finished Diamond pattern scarfs



The mountain pattern scarf

Beh Meh



Beh Meh working

Beh Meh has been living in camp 1 (Karenni site 1) for over 20 years, since 1999. She lives here with her three sons, the youngest is 13 years old. Her oldest daughter resettled to

the United States and lives there with her family, with four children. Beh Meh has been working with WEAVE for since she can remember while living in the camp. You can tell that her Weaving skills are profound. During the training, she devotes parts of her time to helping the other artisans next to crafting her own work. She is enjoying the work with the artisan group during the training, they are laughing and sharing stories and jokes together.

Daily life for Beh Meh includes many activities. There is cooking, washing and cleaning clothes and she is raising pigs and chickens. Besides all these activities, people in the camp know where to find her if they want to order clothes or a shoulder bag, Beh Meh creates and weaves clothing for orders from WEAVE as well as from people in the camp.

Beh Meh tells me she is glad to be able to weave when there are orders. She is motivated to work on the orders as it gives her the opportunity to provide for her family. Beh Meh is the 'breadwinner' and through weaving, she is able to provide for food and clothing for example for her children. For the future, she hopes that her children will finish their education. She wishes that through the education they can access good jobs and in the future, will also be able to take care of her, when she reaches an older age.

Kee Meh

Kee Meh has been living in the camp since 1996. She has three children the oldest is 16 and the youngest is 9. Daily life for Kee Meh is mostly about weaving. She weaves skirts, Karenni shirts and shoulder bags. Weaving for her is about a tradition that gets carried through the generations. Her grandparents used to make their own clothes with weaving, from our family we are used to making our own clothing.

Kee Meh learned how to weave when she was 15 years old from her neighbour. She has been working with WEAVE since three years. She says that weaving allows her to really focus on working. She expresses the necessity of being focussed, otherwise you might be prone to cause inconsistencies in the clothing. When I asked her what her favourite piece to make is, she laughed and said: "the ones that make income".

Kee Meh enjoyed the training. It allowed her to learn about new patterns and to share a working week with fellow artisans. She appreciates WEAVE for providing the opportunity for her to make an income to take care of the family. In the future she hopes for stability in orders, so she is able to work regular hours and feel more stability in the weaving work she is doing.



Kee Meh weaving

Shar Meh

Shar Meh arrived in the camp in 1996. She lives her with her two youngest daughters. Her oldest daughter lives with her grandmother in Karenni State. Usually, she is busy at home with cooking, washing and feeding the chickens and pigs. For income, she goes outside the villages sometimes to work in the forest or fields, picking up banana leaves for example.

Shar Mar learned weaving from her friends in the camp, she has been weaving since two to three years. She joined WEAVE three years ago and has only attended the trainings up until this point. She is very interested in learning weaving and the different patterns. For the future, she is hoping for resettlement. If this does not work out, she would want to keep working with WEAVE. She would be happy to work as a weaver to achieve a stable income and the ability to provide for her family.



Two new members of WEAVE: Mu Meh and Tay Moe

Mu Meh and Tay Moe both joined the program recently. This weaving training is their first time attending the program. Both are happy to join the training. They are willingly taking in the chance to learn about the two patterns addressed in this training.

Tay Moe is very motivated to learn how to weave. She is in uttermost concentration to make the diamond pattern her own. She started learning how to weave since she was around 15 years old. She learned weaving from her mother. Her mother made all clothing and blankets, she did not used to wear the clothes most people wear today. Tay Moe remembers that they only wore the woven clothes her mother made.

Tay Moe has been living in the camp since 2010, she lives her with her three sons. The oldest is 12 years old and the youngest is 4 years old. Her days in the camp look similar to the other artisans' days. She does the housework entailing cooking, washing and raising domestic animals. Besides the housework, she weaves sometimes. She makes shoulder bags for her children for school and on occasion she makes shirts for her children.



Tay Moe weaving

With identical eagerness to learn, Mu Meh is in upper concentration working on weaving the diamond pattern. She learned how to WEAVE three years ago in the camp. She learned it from her neighbour 'auntie', from Beh Meh. Mu Meh is living in the camp since 5 to 6 years. She has three children. Her daily life consist of looking after the kids, including the cooking and she is raising pig.



Mu Meh weaving next to Beh Meh (auntie)

Her goal is to be an expert weaver and receive orders for the clothing she makes. With this, she will be able to provide food and clothes for her family, as well as for her children to receive education. Tay Moe hopes for more opportunities for her and her children in the future. She would like to join some of her family members and go for resettlement. Until this, she is glad to join the program. Participating in the WEAVE program is the job opportunity for her to be able to provide for her family

The ability to make an income and provide for their family is about more than money. Self-reliance by making an income through dignified work is extremely important, not only for the sense of self-worth, but also for the pathway to peace and stability. Women are the backbone of the family and therefore the community. When they are in the position to decide where income goes to