

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2019



In honor of International Women's Day 2019, USAID Thailand Counter Trafficking in Persons (USAID Thailand CTIP) and its partner, The Freedom Story, share the story of Ma Win Yee, a 32-year old Burmese woman who has created an organization for migrants, by migrants that provides various support and advocates for the right to education for migrant children.

Ma Win Yee's desire to become an advocate for education for all began many years ago in her village in Myanmar. Upon completing the fifth grade, Ma Win Yee's family could no longer afford to send her to school. To help support their struggling family, Ma Win Yee and her siblings left school and tried to find work, a difficult task to accomplish with little education. Finding few opportunities in Myanmar, Ma Win Yee decided to move to Thailand in hope of other possibilities. Once there, she quickly found work at a slipper factory in Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province with 50-baht (\$1.57) as her daily earnings. Ma Win Yee could not support her family on such a small allowance and took on additional jobs at the cotton factory, ceramic factory and a local market.

“Being a woman, I had difficult times finding good jobs because women were paid less than men and could not access the same opportunities and wage growth.”

It was during these trying times that Ma Win Yee met her husband, also a migrant but working in construction, with whom she now has two children. Through their shared experiences working in Thailand, Ma Win Yee and her husband, in 2017, created a

charity called "Lat Twe" whose mission is to support vulnerable Burmese. In its first year of operation, the organization has helped more than 30 migrants and raised 13,000 Baht from its members. While most of the currently provided support is directed towards meeting urgent basic needs, Ma Win Yee believes that "**only education can provide for a better future**" and would like more of her efforts on it. She wants to see all migrant children attend school so that they can achieve better jobs and a better life, particularly for girls.

Today, Ma Win Yee continues her work with her charity, connecting with local NGOs and authorities to collaborate to fulfill the goal of having all children go to school. USAID Thailand CTIP and The Freedom Story are inspired by Ma Win Yee's story and her will to make a difference at her community level, particularly for girls and women and we look forward to working closely with her and others like her in the years to come.