Improving Market Opportunities for Women (IMOW) in Myanmar

Myanmar is a country with a rapidly changing economy and has quickly become one of the largest agricultural labor forces in Southeast Asia, with agriculture representing 37.8% of its gross domestic product. Currently, this sector offers many promising opportunities for Myanmar’s rural economic transformation. While women play a significant role in agricultural production and actively take part as buyers and sellers in markets, gender barriers prevent women from fully participating in the economy.

With your support, MEDA’s IMOW project enables women to participate in the economy in Myanmar by strengthening the incomes of 25,000 women producers in the Shan and Kayin States.

Thank you!
Thank you for partnering with entrepreneurs in Myanmar. Your support continues to equip women producers with the resources they need to increase their farm yields, gain greater access to markets, and secure valuable and equitable roles in their communities.

Your support has

- Encouraged leadership among women small producers, lead farmers, and sales agents.
- Improved decision making in business and farming in their community and households.
- Achieved greater integration among their community through the mentorship program.
- Shared key skills including leadership, soft skills, public speaking, gender awareness, communication, and community advocacy/mobilization.
- Instilled a better understanding of the role of women in community development and leadership roles.

“Women can go beyond the kitchen and can become a decision-maker,” Yin Nu said.

Ms. Yin Nu is married with four children and lives in Than Ban village in Kayin State, Myanmar. Most of her time is occupied with her household and farming activities in their family-owned seven-acre plot of land. She struggled during every crop season with many challenges such as poor soil fertility, low crop yield, high labor costs, limited labor access, and low productivity.

When MEDA’s IMOW project was introduced in her village, Yin Nu seized the opportunity to attend a variety of training seminars, including good agriculture practices, bookkeeping, and gender equality. Yin Nu eventually formed the women savings group, “Wine Su Khiang” in her village and was then selected as the group’s leader.

Over the course of her involvement with the savings group, Yin Nu attained higher harvest yields for her rice plots, conducted gender sharing sessions in her community, and became the first woman to be elected to the position of Village Track Administrator for the Than Ban village tract. Her strong commitment and hard work paid off and she is applying the knowledge gained from past training sessions in her position. As a result of her experiences in the program, Yin Nu’s confidence in herself as a woman and leader greatly improved.
Over the course of the project, your gifts have led to the following outcomes:

- **199** women sales agents trained in business, financial management, and record keeping.
- **549** women trained in leadership positions in savings groups.
- **760** women lead farmers educated in new production techniques.
- **2,808** women and men educated in financial management skills.
- **5,227** women lead farmers trained in sustainable agricultural practice.
- **7,542** women connected with 339 savings groups.
- **10,330** women and men who participated in 403 gender equality sessions.
- **$1.8M CAD** generated from savings groups.

Your donations enable MEDA to partner with local organizations and businesses to improve women’s sustainable agricultural practices and productivity, incomes, leadership, decision making skills, and access to goods, services, and market networks.
The impact of COVID-19 on Myanmar has been significant and widely felt across a variety of economic sectors. From women small producers who lost income due to limited or closed market access, to sales agents who had trouble paying their suppliers back, and produce traders who did not have orders coming in from buyers, the effects of the pandemic rippled across the entire value chain.

Even more alarming is how significantly women were impacted by COVID-19 in Myanmar. Over 90% of women who work are employed in the informal economy and have withstood the worst of the economic downturn. During this challenging time, women in Myanmar were more likely to be victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and harassment. Because of their additional role as caretakers in their households, women also have fewer economic opportunities than men.2

Despite the tremendous toll that COVID-19 has wreaked across Myanmar and the world, your support has enabled women in Myanmar to triumph over adversity and harness their ingenuity, business, and leadership abilities to become models for future generations.