

Rising sales for batik shirts produced by World Vision's livelihood center in Ban Nai Rai

By Cecil Laguardia, Thailand Tsunami Response Communications Manager



Twenty-four women at World Vision's batik-making livelihood center in Ban Nai Rai are having a great time coping with rising orders for colorfully designed batik shirts. As quality of the shirts kept improving, orders are pouring in from nearby communities and provinces, from government offices and World Vision area development programs (ADPs).

At present, forty orders for shirts are waiting in line. World Vision staff Suchada Amornlak said the biggest single order they have was 21 shirts from Pakphanang Agricultural Coop in Nakhonsithammarath province. Amornlak said the interest is catching-up and many who see the shirts immediately place order.

World Vision Thailand Deputy Director Chitra Thumborisuth who has ordered several shirts herself has appreciated the improvement in the women's skills. "They are much better now, World Vision can really be proud of the products." She added it is a proof that the women are enjoying what they are doing and they have the talent for such intricate designs.

Amornlak helps the women in their marketing campaign. "I wear the shirt all the time, especially when I go to government offices. It is usually effective as people would see how nice it is." They have also started setting up display centers in the weekend markets where many tourists flock. "We even have orders from Prince of Songkla University."

Of the 24 women, four are the most skillful ones. The rest assist in the boiling of the cloths to take off the wax, washing, ironing and putting them on display. Amornlak said that though a lot of the women find it difficult to switch work from fishing and farming to batik making, they are just happy to work on menial assignments to beat the deadline for orders. "They can do the easier work and are equally proud of their contribution."

For those who work full-time, they earn as much as Baht 7,000 (US\$179) a month, an already hefty amount that could support many of their families' basic needs. Amornlak said they are both happy and proud that they are earning their own income. "World Vision's support is crucial to sustain this project."

She further added that the project has become a "showcase of positive things" that are happening in the village of Ban Nai Rai after the tsunami. "Come to think of it, if the product goes out and people knows that it was made in Ban Nai Rai, it becomes a source of pride for everyone."

For many of the women, she emphasized, it will not be just earning an income but contributing something good for the community. The batik shirts in Ban Nai Rai have, indeed, gone places.

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