



Winner



Thiri Aung,
CEO of Women Transforming
Myanmar

Women Transforming Myanmar

About the Company

Name: Women Transforming Myanmar

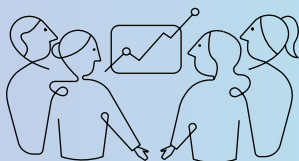
Country: Myanmar

Employees: 1-10 Employees

Percentage of women employees:
Above 80%

Website:

<https://womentransformingmm.com>



Women Transforming Myanmar (WTM) aims to empower women and promote gender equality in Myanmar through leadership development, economic empowerment and advocacy programmes. Founded by Thiri Aung, WTM supports women entrepreneurs and leaders by providing training, consultancy and a robust community network.

Empowering women to transform Myanmar

In Myanmar, social norms restrict women's access to certain professions and leadership roles, confining many to lower-paying jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, causing female unemployment to rise fivefold, from 2 per cent in 2017 to 10 per cent in 2022.¹ Adding to these challenges, the political, economic and humanitarian crises following the 2021 military takeover have stretched families to their limits, with women disproportionately affected.

In response to these challenges, and after witnessing how women were increasingly turning to online platforms to launch small businesses, entrepreneur and advocate Thiri Aung founded Women Transforming Myanmar in 2020. Noting that many lacked the training, mentoring and resources needed for entrepreneurship, she created WTM as a community to help women entrepreneurs thrive and create job opportunities for others.

Turning knowledge into power

Drawing on over 15 years of corporate and entrepreneurial experience, Thiri designed and delivered programmes in collaboration with international organizations. For example, she organized Transformative Feminist Leadership Programmes with ActionAid Myanmar and UN agencies from 2022 to 2024. This initiative brought together

¹ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/brief/myanmar-labour-market-update-2023>



entrepreneurs from across WTM’s network, blending business leadership with gender equality and human rights. It has empowered more than 350 women with the knowledge and confidence to lead in their communities and industries.

Thiri’s other initiatives include the Women Entrepreneurship Guidebook, a practical resource offering templates and tools to help women navigate the complexities of starting and running a business. Through the WTM Business Club, more than 200 women regularly participate in weekly training sessions that cover areas like business operations, financial management and marketing strategies. To extend its reach, WTM facilitates the Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Programme on the UNDP eLearning Portal, in collaboration with UNDP and other UN agencies. Nearly 400 women—mainly small business owners and first-time entrepreneurs in rural and peri-urban areas with limited access to in-person training and equipment—have been trained in business management, market access and leadership.



We empower women from all walks of life, from small business owners like tailors and noodle shop vendors to women working in technology.

Our mission goes beyond helping them earn money; it’s about enabling them to lead in their families and communities. In these challenging times, we stand together, supporting one another to become stronger.

**Thiri Aung,
CEO, Women Transforming Myanmar**

Beyond structured programmes, Thiri is a committed advocate for women entrepreneurs on both national and international platforms. She collaborates with organizations such as the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Impact Hub Yangon and Sun Business Network, as well as non-profits including the French and German Chambers of Commerce, Prevent Plastic Myanmar and the British Chamber of Commerce. She also works with civil society groups such as the Women Entrepreneurship Network and Young Entrepreneur Association to deliver capacity-building programmes, leadership training, support for women returning to the workforce and the promotion of sustainable and inclusive business practices. Through such partnerships, Thiri has reached hundreds of women since 2022, amplifying the impact of WTM’s work on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. As a mentor, speaker and panelist, she also represents the voices of Myanmar’s women, inspiring others with her vision of an inclusive economy.

Changing lives through resilience

Since its launch in 2020, WTM has built a network of over 5,000 women entrepreneurs and leaders across industries including food production, textiles, education, mental healthcare and environmental consulting. WTM participants have launched and sustained businesses that contribute to local economies and create jobs, demonstrating the initiative’s transformative potential.



Despite operating in an unstable environment, WTM has remained resilient and adaptable. By focusing on practical, hands-on training tailored to the diverse needs of women entrepreneurs, the organization has helped overcome barriers such as limited access to resources, restrictive social norms and economic volatility. These efforts ensure that women entrepreneurs are not only surviving but building thriving businesses despite challenging conditions.

WTM measures its success through participation rates, business outcomes and participant feedback. Since 2020, it has built a network of over 5000 women entrepreneurs,

and trained hundreds of women both in person and online. Around 250 women are actively engaged in WTM's weekly Business Club trainings, with many reporting improved financial management, stronger networks and increased confidence as a result. Several participants have also expanded their businesses and created new employment opportunities within 6 to 12 months of training. These metrics speak to the success of WTM initiatives and enable continuous improvement of programmes to address the evolving needs of women entrepreneurs.

Thiri's work has been widely recognized, including the Women Empowerment Prize from the USAID Women Entrepreneurship Programme and a feature article by the United Nations during International Women's Day 2024. Looking ahead, she aims to expand WTM's reach through online platforms such as LinkedIn, strengthen partnerships with international organizations and enhance advocacy efforts to promote gender equality at the national level.



WTM's story is one of resilience, vision and transformative impact, demonstrating that even in the most challenging circumstances, women can drive meaningful change and build a more equitable future for Myanmar.

The UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards recognize exemplary private sector actions to advance gender equality and women's empowerment within a specific category, location, and time period. Recognition as an awardee does not imply endorsement by UN Women of the organization or of individuals, nor does it constitute a formal partnership. Any claims, statements, or endorsements made by awardees remain the responsibility of the respective private sector organization and do not reflect the official policies or positions of UN Women.

Women's Empowerment Principles



High-Level Corporate Leadership



Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination



Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety



Education and Training for Career Advancement



Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices



Community Initiatives and Advocacy



Measurement and Reporting

asiapacificwepsawards.org
weps.org

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#GenderActionLab #WEPsAwards

[linkedin.com/showcase/wepprinciples](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/wepprinciples)

