

Quarterly Newsletter
Winter 2012/2013



Women
Empowerment



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WE Project Milestone 2 Reached: 1000 Women Trained

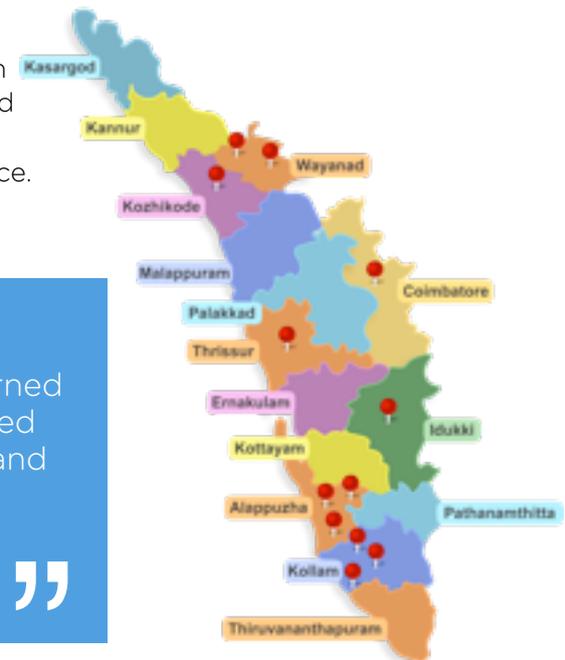
To date, nearly 1,500 women have enrolled in the Women Empowerment Project training courses. The second milestone of the project has been reached, and the impact of the course is being measured with exciting results. The WE Project is making huge strides and has accomplished quite a lot in such a short span of time. Kerala now has a new, stronger population of women. 1,500 women are now active community leaders, making informed decisions and taking control of their lives both within

and outside the home. 1,500 women are now equipped with the skills to earn an income and to organize their lives to make their communities a better place.

“

With the things I learned from this class I gained confidence to work and earn a living from that.

- Suraji (Evoor, Batch 2)



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WE Centers Participant Dashboard

centers		# of batches	# Students	# Graduating	# Ongoing
PERMANENT CENTERS	Thrissur	4	62	31	29
	Paripally	2	82	18	16
	Adimali	4	80	51	24
	Calicut	4	69	29	37
	Amritapuri	7	101	85	4
	Meppadi	7	126	107	8
	Onampilli	6	86	58	15
	Evoor	6	101	65	20
	Mananthavady	6	130	69	43
	Nedumkandam	2	35	31	0
	Alleppey Beach	6	102	56	22
	Chavara	3	48	40	0
	Pala	1	15	0	15
	SUBTOTAL		58	993	638
MoVE - MOBILE VOCATIONAL CENTERS	Rajamudi	1	93	51	0
	Kochuthovala	1	24	21	0
	Kudayathoor	1	69	22	0
	Elemplassery	1	56	37	0
	Muniyara	1	88	51	0
	Pambanar	1	103	39	0
	Murikkassery	1	61	40	0
	SUBTOTAL		7	494	261
TOTAL		65	1487	899	233

Center Openings

Since October

4 Permanent centers have opened in Thrissur, Calicut, Paripally and Pala.

The major MoVE deployment in the Idukki district also occurred with seven mobile centers created. Coming very soon, seven new centers will be launched, including centers in Madurai and Ettimadai, Tamil Nadu.

The very first Women Empowerment Course on Plumbing was launched on February 18th, 2013 in the Amritapuri center. Using the 2011 pilot study of the plumbing program as a model, a new batch has enrolled in the course to learn from the newly updated and improved MES Plumbing Assistant course.



MoVE Special Deployment

From November 4th to December 9th 2012, the MoVE Vehicle hit the road. They were to undertake the greatest challenge faced by the project to date: train 500 women in one month. Traveling to 12 centers in the rural district of Idukki, Kerala, the MoVE team, with the help of Amrita JSS Idukki, met, and then exceeded the challenge by training 542 women over the course of four weeks. Students were trained in one of several exciting and empowering courses including: Fabric Painting, Ornamental Jewelry Making, Soap Making, Vegetable Cultivation, and Flower arrangement, along with the computerized Life Enrichment Education.

MoVE has drastically increased the footprint of the deployment, making it possible for remote areas with no infrastructure to receive the W. E. Project training because of the in-house facilities in the MoVE van. People who before couldn't dream of using the latest technology now have access, and have met the challenge of learning new skills with enthusiasm.

For a majority of the students, this was the first time that they experienced computerized training in their lives. Naturally, they were reluctant to use computer. But, over time, they gained confidence which positively affected their in class participation.

Never before has AMMACHI Labs been able to train so many people in so little time. This was only possible because of the MoVE Vehicle and its ability to reach anyone and everyone, delivering high quality and effective trainings. This is truly an exceptional feat worth celebrating!

Events

Women Empowerment Project Expo for Hand Painted Crafts

Over 100 women from several districts in Kerala joined together on Saturday, December 15th to hold the first ever Women Empowerment Project Expo for Hand Painted Crafts. The women who participated in this expo were all recent graduates of the one-month vocational training course on Fabric Painting, that incorporates Computerized Vocational Education and Training (CVET), as well as a Life Enrichment Education (LEE) Curriculum that teaches leadership, decision-making, and community involvement skills.



The December 15th Expo was inaugurated by Swami Jnanamritananda Puri, Mr. Sudeep, Director of Amrita University at Amritapuri Campus, Chairman of Amrita JSS and Mr. Ranganathan, Director of Amrita SREE, along with special invited guests Dr. Kenneth Salisbury of Stanford University, Dr. Margaret Minsky of University of Massachusetts.

An award for Best Deployment Center was given out to the

Meppadi center by Mr. Sudeep, in recognition of the tremendous effort the students, facilitators, and district coordinators put in. This center, in particular, went over and beyond what was asked of them in several ways, from taking initiative on exploring new options for earning income, to stand out participation and high performance during the course. This award will be given quarterly to the centers in a hope to inspire higher performance and community pride.

Swami Jnanamritananda Puri officially opened the expo by cutting the ribbon to the exhibition hall. It was difficult to tell who was more excited during the exhibit—the women selling their products or the customers eagerly picking through the selection, as the energy in the room was electric. Many customers walked home with several handicrafts, and all were full of praise for the hard work and exceptional quality of the products on display. Said one visitor from the US, “This is an



inspiring exhibition to make visible what potential lies in us women—Yes we can!” She proudly showed off the hand-painted sari she had purchased for a loved one back home.

The event was widely attended – over 100 participants from the various training centers

participated by bringing their hand-made items for sale, and over 500 guests visited the expo. Participants of the expo demonstrated high creativity –



selling a wide range of products from painted fabrics to painted bottles and bags. Within 3 hours, the participants earned a combined total of nearly Rs. 30,000.

Such a successful event clearly demonstrates the ability of such training to bring out the inherent strength and abilities of women, allowing them to overcome any obstacles to achieve empowerment. Remani, one of the graduates from the course in Meppadi, Wayanad said it best, “When I started, I did not expect to be able to do much, but now, seeing our sales and reflecting on our experience here, I feel like I can do anything.” Her stall sold out of most of the products they brought with them, and hope to set up business deals with local shops to promote their crafts.

The Creation Lab

The “Creation Lab,” is a pilot project that was implemented with graduated participants from the Amritapuri Center to create and produce marketable, high quality products, fulfilling international orders.

Making A Living

Events such as the Hand Painted Crafts Expo publicized through our social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, AMMACHI Labs website) have propelled the Women Empowerment Project and its participants to the international stage - as orders for products made by WE participants have begun to role in from all corners of the world. One vendor from the United States placed an order for over 100 hand painted bamboo bangles. Another for over 1,000 painted altar cloths. As the logistics, design sensibilities and the general way of doing business differs drastically in the west, the AMMACHI Labs team wanted to ensure the participants were given the required support for them to complete the orders.



The first group of participants successfully completed their first order of 100 bangles. A plan is currently underway to expand the Creation Lab to all graduates of the Women Empowerment Project.



Main Focus

Product Development:

trainings, workshops, productions, creation and design of products in order to achieve high quality.

Structure:

organize groups, funds, savings and documents in order to set up self help groups, cooperatives and small business.

Attitude:

Self Confidence, Initiative, Discipline and Creativity.



LEE Initiatives

During the course, many of the students found that they were not alone in the problems they face in their lives. This sharing of issues and concerns has led to greater enthusiasm, confidence, and a greater sense of empowerment. So much so, that in some cases, students have felt an immediate need to take action. Participants from the Mananthavady center, for example, decided to create a petition to close down one of the alcohol shops next to their children's school. In Adimallil (Idukki District), the students also pledged to meet weekly to take action on issues that concern their community.

Evoor

Graduates from the Evoor Center felt children lacked the self confidence and strength to deal with life's challenges such as school bullying, drugs and alcohol. They pledged to begin a series of awareness classes for children in their community, starting first with confidence



building and public speaking.

Mananthavady

Alcohol and drug abuse is fast becoming a rampant problem among youth in India. This group

of graduates from the Mananthavady Center delivered an awareness class on the topic to students from the local school.

Meppadi

Domestic violence is a frequent issue, but rarely discussed in public, which is why this group of graduates from the Meppadi Center felt propelled to conduct an awareness class on the topic. Students prepare for their session.



Success Stories

Suraji (Evoor, Batch 2)

"After joining this course, I got to know more about fabric painting and I could also express my ideas and viewpoints. I also got confidence to earn income from fabric painting. Now I have income of my own. After completing all the house hold work, I spend 1 or 2 hours for doing fabric painting. The Expo motivated me a lot. Many of my products sold on the same day. With the things I learned from this class I gained confidence to work and earn a living from that. I have done painting on 10 pots, 5 saris, 12 shawls, 7 bouquet, 5 clay candles, 5 churidars, and 1 handkerchief - a total of 45 working hours. From the sales I got Rs. 5,030. The amount which I spend for the materials includes Rs.3615. My profit is Rs.1415. I wish

to continue in this field. I wish I could make more profit so that I can meet the needs and wants of my family. I also received many orders. I got orders for 2 pots (Rs. 200 each), Pillow cover 5, and 2 saris."

Santhamma(Evoor, Batch 4)

Everyone teased me when I joined for this course as I was 60 years old. But I was confident enough to attend the class daily. But, after class, as a unit we put a stall in our nearby temple and it was a great success. Now at this age, I have the confidence to start a business of my own. I have the confidence to face any kind of problems in the society. I worked for 12 hours and I sold my products for Rs.1050 and gained Rs.540 as profit.

Sumithra, Suja (Meppadi, Batch 1)

Before joining this course I was aware about nothing. Even I don't know how to interact with people. But after attending the 21 days class I learned many things and I gained confidence to interact with people. I learned to use a computer. I have confidence to face and react to any injustice in my society. As a person, I totally changed." Said by Sumithra.



Research and Findings

The WE Project was constructed around a research question: How does cVET and LEE impact the economic and social/democratic empowerment of women? As such, research is a fundamental aspect of the project implementation. To date, the first round of post-course analysis has been conducted, demonstrating the impact the course has had on the participants.

The table below is a quantitative representation of data collected through the post-course survey. The survey is aimed at assessing the four indicators the WE project is utilizing to assess progress towards empowerment. The research team will continue to track the participants, with the final goal to publish project findings and contribute to the global literature on women empowerment. The research team on the W.E. Project will continue in its efforts to follow the participants, with the final goal to publish the project findings and contribute to the global literature on women and empowerment.

Indicator 1	34% reported feeling a heightened self confidence in their ability to do something to earn money.	30% declared that they feel now confident to paint and draw because they learned this class. 11% mentioned they feel confident to create a business.	
Indicator 2	Respondents expressed a plan to practice the skill on their own dresses and then for others, to get an earning. They also declared a plan to work as a unit, or group.	<h1>Post Course Survey Data</h1>	
Indicator 3	21% of participants mentioned that discipline has increased in their life, they are more punctual and they can organize their time to keep some time free to work. They learned time management.		
Indicator 4	34% said that now they have their family support and encouragement. Women are doing fabric painting for their kids' dress for themselves. The participants reported feeling more valued by their family. Only 7% declared that the course did not bring any changes to their life.	22% said that now they feel confident to talk in front of people. 20% mentioned that they feel confident to talk against social injustice, dowry, caste system, and alcoholism. A few of them declared that they want to go against the dowry system for their children's marriage.	Women also declared that they are now feeling confident to confront any injustice, but that they are more confident to address it as a group. 10% mentioned they would not be able to do it; they don't have enough courage.



Next

Phase: Milestone 3

The Next Phase of WE

The Women Empowerment Project is entering the next phase, with the goal to train 1,000 more participants in a growing number of vocations and Life Skills. Based on an enormous wealth of experience gained from the Milestone 2, the W.E. Team is planning to further streamline and focus the project execution, so



that the next participants have an even more positive experience.

As planned, the W.E. Project is also expanding the deployment zone to include the state of Tamil Nadu and uncovered parts of Kerala, where there is a great need of such courses. The next center is to be opened in Pala, in the district of Kottayam, Kerala, and subsequently in Ettimandai and Madurai in Tamil Nadu.



Apart from this, a wing of our UNDEF deployment team is now dedicating its entire efforts to nurturing the entrepreneurial abilities of our trained participants. Already, these efforts are bearing results. The Make a Living participants (all graduates of the W.E. Project) are starting to form organized business groups, and have fulfilled their first international orders. These are tremendous achievements for our W.E. Project in such a short period of time.

Milestone 3:

- Train another 1000 women
- open new centers
- start new courses