

## Potential Mentees – Connect Her: MPE&VCA Women Mentoring Programme 2023

The following list of people from the MPE&VCA network have shown interest in participating as “Mentees” in MPE&VCA’s mentoring programme.

1) Aye Thandar Thein

SCM Sportswear

SECTOR: Manufacturing (Sportswear production)

AGE: 36

PREFERENCE: Myanmar language-speaking mentor

Yangon

SCM Sportswear is a wholesaler of jersey sportswear clothing and football shoes with factories in Yangon’s South Dagon township. SCM uses customised fabric imported from China and sells the final product to the local market through wholesale to well-known local sports shops like Shwe Pyae Sone and One Sports.

Aye is leading a team of 100+ employees and as she takes her business to the next level, she intends to get guidance from a mentor regarding her approach to carrying out her business strategies. The company claims to have seen growth in the past year, surviving off its local production mainly due to the affordability during the current global economic downtime. The company saw an approximate 5 percent growth during the 2022-23 financial year with regard to the company’s profitability when compared with the previous year. With monthly sales at about K200 million (\$95,853), Aye aims to expand her market beyond Myanmar, to the ASEAN region. This is where she finds the expertise and network of the mentor can play an important role in supporting her business.

2) Aye Aye Theint

Ngwe Gyoe Gyar (Silver Crane)

SECTOR: Agriculture (food products)

AGE: 42

Yangon; Shan state

Silver Crane (“Ngwe Gyoe Gyar” in Burmese) is a brand for potato chips and green tea available in a number of well-known retail mini-markets such as One Stop and Family Mart in Yangon and in Shan State. Aye began as the founder of Silver Crane in 2017. Aye’s production facility was in Heho, Shan State during the earlier years but is currently relocated to Yangon. As founder of Ngwe Gyoe Gyar, Aye takes pride in the production of value-add product lines which include six varieties of potato snacks, five types of pure green tea leaves and its newest dry and wet jam and juice products.

Currently available at modern trade outlets in Yangon, Aye’s brand is one that comes with quality and great packaging, perfect to give as a gift during traditional ceremonies. Aye is weathering the effects of the economic instabilities impacted by the exchange rate fluctuation, high inflation and global geopolitical tensions. “Price hikes in raw materials and other commodities have put an enormous impact on our profit margin, causing lower profits even though the sales volume looks good,” said Aye. The monthly revenue of Silver Crane is around K30 million (\$14,280). Even at

a lower profit margin this year, Aye's business is seeing a 10 to 15 percent growth based on the company's profitability.

Currently running her company with 21 staff, Aye aims to tap into the export market in the near future. Her aim for business expansion comes along with her intentions for loan funding.

Aye has been working hard building her brand and has no plans to slow down: "I didn't take a break during Covid because if I did, it would be hard to build my brand again," said Aye who had experience as a trainer at the training of the Ministry of Science and Technology. By participating in the mentoring programme of MPE&VCA, Aye prefers to get guidance on areas such as marketing, business management and supply chain management in order to help her company move to the next level.

### 3)Chaw Htet Myat

Bagan Nyaung U Peanut Oil Sales and Trading

SECTOR: Agriculture (food)

AGE: 49

Nyaung U

Chaw is a small business owner cum business advisor who challenged herself to better understand the edible oil business supply chain in Myanmar. She is currently working for Cesvi Myanmar, a non-profit organisation, as a business advisor to farmers in the middle part of the country and at the same time, has been leading a peanut oil production and trading business in Nyaung U. Started in 2021, Bagan Nyaung U Peanut Oil targets the upper-middle-class consumers while making its brand available in Nyaung U and Yangon. The business is currently seeing profit and growth is between 5 to 10 percent in the last financial year when compared to the previous year. Chaw is running the business together with her husband as she tries her best to overcome the headwinds a small business faces in the country, especially when it comes to finding out the best options in raising capital to take her business to the next level. By participating in the mentoring programme of MPE&VCA, Chaw expects guidance around access to capital and strategic direction for her business expansion. Chaw believes it will be helpful to receive from the mentor: suggestions and recommendations on the best approach to raising funds and to be connected to more sources for financial access. On the strategic side, as Chaw primarily leads the marketing initiatives and strategizing, she prefers the mentor's recommendations around a modernised approach to marketing her products.

Bagan Nyaung U Peanut Oil currently stands at monthly sales between K4.5 million (\$2,143) to K9 million (\$4285) and Chaw hopes to move to the next step of commercialising her business in the near future. Chaw has an MBA degree and informally has over four years of experience in business advisory practice.

### 4)Myat Myat Moe

Jupiter Moe Ltd

SECTOR: Healthcare (Personal care products)

AGE: 47

Taunggyi

Myat founded Jupiter Moe personal care product brand in 2019, producing hand sanitisers, sanitising sprays, and hand wash products manufactured in Taunggyi, Shan

State. Myat is making the best use of her chemical engineering education to manage her personal care product line which is available in both Taunggyi and Yangon. With an aim to see growth for her business, Myat is looking at improving business strategy in areas of marketing, and branding, with an emphasis on the specifics such as channels for distribution as part of the marketing strategy.

As a former technical advisor at GIZ focusing on tourism and her involved in the implementation of community-based tourism at villages in parts of Shan State, such as Danu, Palaung and Pa-O areas, on a professional level, Myat had already been providing a positive contribution to her community. Myat believes that the establishment of her business and her past experience working in tourism not only contributed to her stature as a businesswoman but also had an indirect positive impact on her wider network through establishing good examples.

Going forward, it is important for Myat to make the most appropriate decisions as she takes her business to the next level, the reason why she thinks having a mentor would be helpful.

Business is going on steadily but Myat wishes to see improvements to the company's current performance of monthly sales at K1,000,000 (\$477). The business saw a 5 percent growth in the company's profitability during the 2022-23 financial year when compared to the previous year. Myat intends to launch new offerings in the near future.

#### 5) Sharr Thet Zaw

Sharrtz.org

SECTOR: Technology (AR/VR and metaverse industry)

AGE: 30

Sharr Thet Zaw started Sharrtz.org in 2019 which specialises in building software, tools, and applications that use Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology to offer an immersive experience to users in Myanmar. The main implementation project of Sharrtz.org is the Metaverse for commerce platform which was introduced in 2022. Her work can be seen at Myoe Pya, a metaverse where users can buy and sell products in a virtual environment; businesses like The NUT Butter, Dinger and Baby Yoon are listed on the platform. Those businesses on the Myo Pya platform are not yet ready to be showcased as 3 D products in its cutting-edge virtual 3D rooms but the platform is being developed to incorporate invoicing and digital delivery options, as part of its development roadmap to help buyers and sellers experience a new form of shopping experience.

A year after the creation of Myo Pya, Sharrtz is ready to get into the market for revenue generation and aims to seek growth for its business. Sharr prefers to get guidance on the fundraising part and to better understand the steps and preparation that encompass the different stages of fundraising. She seeks guidance from a mentor who could be better positioned to guide a tech startup. Sharr's near-term plan for Myo Pya includes entering into a partnership for reselling the products globally. Sharr expects a fashion shop can be the first to be featured on the Myo Pya platform.

#### 6)Shwe Yee Phyoe

Tint Tint Myanmar Dessert

SECTOR: Manufacturing (Food production)

AGE: 39

Yangon

Shwe started the Tint Tint Myanmar dessert business in 2013 with fresh dessert menus and since then has expanded to another two categories: dry and frozen desserts. The traditional desserts typically made from rice and gluten, among others, are available through seven of its own branches in Yangon while the ready-made desserts are made available through distribution channels. To date, Tint Tint has as many as 47 types of Myanmar desserts on its menu, which makes Shwe one of the few businesswomen who is taking the traditional Myanmar dessert business to the next level using creative concepts. Shwe now leads 35 staff employed under Tint Tint and takes pride in exemplifying a positive attitude and mindset to her staff. Shwe faced the 2021 year in freefall, forcing her to close all physical shops and move online to struggle hard to cover the staff's salary. Growth plummeted to -26 percent in 2021 but starting in 2022, Tint Tint's growth climbed more than 15 percent from the previous year. Tint Tint's current monthly sales reaches K40 million (\$19,183) and compared to the previous year, the 2022-23 financial year looks favourable in relation to the company's revenue and profitability, amid looming challenges in the realm of escalating price and expenses.

According to Shwe, the biggest challenge for her business is not having enough human resources and working capital to grow. The other issues remain largely around human resources — job hopping issues, low motivation of employees, and other issues that require the need to provide them with psychological support. By joining the mentoring programme, Shwe hopes to receive support to improve business performance, realise her goal to expand to the ASEAN regional market and further contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, said Shwe.

7)Thinn Myat Aung

Mr. Clean Laundry and Dry Cleaning

SECTOR: Professional services

AGE: 29

PREFERENCE: Myanmar language-speaking mentor

Yangon

Some may think that a laundry and dry-cleaning startup business may not be that promising, but Thinn, who founded Mr. Clean, says the business is rapidly growing and becoming widely accepted in parts of the city's "blue-collar" neighbourhood. Before Covid-19, Thinn had a physical setup at almost all townships but post-Covid, she had to revise the business and change it to having only one branch in Thingangyun township to accept orders and an operating location in South Dagon township. "Before Covid, we managed to give franchises but as the waves kicked off, it dealt a blow to our business. However, we kept on surviving," said Thinn. With the rise in price for raw materials, they managed to keep a thin profit margin but still managed to see growth for the 2022-23 financial year. Their price for laundry and ironing are affordable for many — a bed sheet costs K1500 (\$0.7), a vest at K200 (\$0.09), a pent at between K250 (\$0.11) and K400 (\$0.19) and a two-way delivery at just K1000(\$0.5). "The demand is high even in places where the working class is located," said Thinn who had experience joining a mentorship programme organised by "How She Did It" group where she shared about setting up a new business. Thinn is eager to learn more about access to finance, improving her professional skill set and new market expansions.

8)Thin Yu Hlaing  
QTEC  
SECTOR: Education  
AGE: 37  
Yangon

Thin is the founder and principal of Yangon-based QTEC education centre. Founded in 2014, QTEC offers courses in English and management for different educational stages, from basic to diploma level. Currently QTEC has over 100 students, and Thin leads a team of 15 staff comprising three full-time teachers. Throughout the past years, she managed to overcome a number of headwinds including a time when the Covid-19 pandemic dealt a blow to her business, forcing her to move fully online and close down three physical school branches. However, Thin got QTEC back on track with the recent reopening of physical classes at two of her learning centres in Kyeemyindaing Township, Yangon. Talking about the times during the pandemic, Thin said, “We moved fully online since the very early days and tried hard to make students and parents adapt to online learning. On top of that, we emphasise affordability. We have considered a fee reasonable for many.”

In fact, Thin has even managed to close a deal to collaborate with another leading educational centre to expand QTEC’s presence to Mandalay.

QTEC’s monthly turnover hits between K7,500,000 to K10,000,000 and already sees a profit for the business despite having to deal with managing unpredictable financial obstacles that comes with her business operations.

With Thin having great plans to broaden her business presence, she is willing to receive guidance on moving her business to the next level by participating in MPE&VCA’s Women Mentoring Programme.

“I intend to connect with educational institutions abroad and expand my business network,” said Thin. “Guidance regarding a marketing plan and developing our branding would be of help.”

9)Yolanda Yu Yu Naing  
Ozanam  
SECTOR: Agriculture, Healthcare, Manufacturing  
AGE: 32  
Mandalay

Yu has mastered a wide array of skills, from making cosmetics to value-added food products, gardening, restaurant management and advisory on starting a new business. Having an education background in Microbiology, Yu’s food production business is about transforming the entire part of an agriproduct into a value add. Yu is leading a team transforming banana trees into consumable products — transforming the leaves into medicinal herbs; the stem and waste into fabric; and its flowers into a cup of banana tea. As a result, Ozanam, an organic cosmetics product line manufactured in Kyaukse, Mandalay region is now widely sold across Myanmar.

The unique selling point for Ozanam is the production of individually customised cosmetics treats based on users’ skin type and even blood type.

In addition to the manufacturing of cosmetics, Ozanma is soon introducing its newest consumable product, a sleep booster supplement drink which is planned to be launched in October 2023.

She does this agriproduct value-adds by collaborating with local farmers like banana plant growers while leading her business with a production team of 15. As a way of

giving back to the community, Yu gives training through institutions like Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) in Mandalay.

Ozanma's monthly sales is at K3 million (\$1,438) and the 2022-23 financial year saw a 10 percent growth in profitability compared with the previous year.

Yu finds the need for investment is the biggest challenge for her at this time and as a mentee, wants to get guidance on subjects like access to finance, and improving business performance, and strategy on specifics such as strategy to promote her new product banana flour as part of the intention to address the issue of malnutrition within the country.

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