

# MEET THE TEACHERS

## *THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE ANDAMAN CENTER FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION*



### Covid-19 Teacher Reflections:

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers expressed the difficulties it has brought to the Burmese migrant community. Many families are living in greater poverty as they have lost jobs or are receiving limited salaries and they do not have access to government support. This has added to the emphasis on students receiving an education in order to find better, more reliable jobs. Teachers felt that the situation was handled extremely well with the help of the Foundation for Education and Development's education direction and health team support. They were able to follow a simple SOP protocol that put in social distancing and hygiene regulations at the center.

One way this was implemented was by having kindergarten and first grade students learn from home. Students had to adapt to the new rules and learning set up. It took a couple of weeks but students and teachers were able to adjust and work together to create a safe environment. Teachers all said that they felt their work load increased to ensure the safety of the students. They had to adjust teaching techniques, adjust lesson plans and timelines for the semester learning goals.

Currently, the student attendance is at about 83, which is the highest it has ever been. Typically, during school breaks, families will go back to Myanmar to visit family and sometimes they will not return to Thailand. This year, families did not travel because of financial burden, safety and borders being closed. We are expecting student numbers to remain the same or even increase as families feel safer in Thailand at this time. All teachers expressed that student's ability to follow instruction and their knowledge of hygiene has increased tremendously and that they all are washing hands.



SCIENCE AND ENGLISH TEACHER

U SAUKOLAR

Mr. U Saukolar is 26 years old, from Tawai Myanmar. His family currently resides in Myanmar and he sends money to them every month to support their living expenses. He graduated with an engineering degree in Myanmar from an accredited University in Yangon. After University, he began to teach night classes and found his passion for teaching. He began to look at job postings for full time teaching positions in Thailand and discovered the Andaman Center for Migrant Education. He was moved by the migrant working communities struggle with poverty and the children's limited access to education. He has been teaching at ACME for 1 year and 8 months.

Additional responsibilities he has include: assisting with projects like health education, distribution of relief packages to the local Burmese community, community survey's, assisting the Foundation for Education and Development's migrant rights team to hold informational meetings about current issues, building maintenance and upkeep at the center. He also feels his job role is to protect the students, promote their education and also teach to the best of his ability. On evenings and weekends, he has initiated special projects like health activities, storytelling about Burmese culture and also cleaning, upkeep and beautification of the center grounds.

His favorite part of being a teacher is teaching the English language to students. English is a world language and if students can master it, they will have a broader range of job opportunity and be able to live a more successful, safe and knowledgeable life. Saukolar thinks that the Andaman Center for Migrant Education is a unique learning center because: students can study Myanmar, Thai and English reading and writing, students have the opportunity to study and practice conversational English with volunteers. He also enjoys working with Andaman Discoveries and the North Andaman Network Foundation in finding funding for the center and is grateful for donor support.

He thinks the center benefits the entire Burmese Community because: parents can work freely knowing their children are at a safe center, students can get transfer certificates if families decide to move back to Myanmar, ACME is used as community center for activities and other organizations can conduct trainings, celebrations and events. Continued education is the goal for students graduating from ACME. Saukolar feels that most students want to continue their education in either Thailand or Myanmar. He helps to facilitate a transfer by writing letters of recommendation, providing accredited transcripts and counseling on appropriate educational institutions.

**Situation in Myanmar:** He very sad and worried about his country and family, he cannot get in contact with them because the internet has been blocked. Another issue is that he cannot send money to them and he is worried they will run out of funds to pay rent and buy food. Saukolar continues to show up for school with a smile on his face and teaches the students even though his family is at risk every second of the day. He said that parents of students are expressing concern for their families back home and that they feel safer in Thailand. Families have no plan to return to Myanmar at this time and do not have the funds to travel to other locations in Thailand. This is the main reason why student numbers will stay the same or increase in the upcoming Semester.



MATH AND BURMESE LANGUAGE TEACHER

# DAW YIN MOM MYIAT

Teacher Mom is 41 years old and is from Yangon, Myanmar. Her mother and son are currently living in Yangon and her husband has passed away. Mom has been living in Thailand for 10 years. As sole caretaker of her family, she made the heartbreaking decision to move to Thailand and be a teacher to receive a higher salary. Her dream is to save enough money to bring her mother and son to Thailand. Mom graduated from highschool in Myanmar but was unable to finish her law degree because her family could not afford tuition. She always had a passion for teaching and guiding children in achieving their life aspirations. She thinks that teaching is a respectable profession and she wants the migrant children in Thailand to have increased knowledge and awareness so they can get good jobs and live a peaceful life.

Before moving to Thailand, she was a counselor at a local highschool and gained practical educational teaching experience. She has now been teaching at ACME for six years and has created a strong bond within the local community, bridging the gap between parents and the center. Additional responsibilities include: assisting with women's empowerment projects, putting together student groups to plant flowers and vegetables, assisting the Foundation for Education and Development with community health education, assisting with community based organizations charity programs that help to bring in donations, assisting the Foundation for Education and Development's migrant rights team with relief aid packages, coordinating parent teacher meetings, school celebrations, and student house visits, writing invitation letters for community and school meetings and hands them out to the local Burmese community.

Her favorite part of teaching is explaining new concepts and passing knowledge to students. She wants to broaden their horizons and teach about the world. She is proud to work for ACME because students receive an accredited education and can continue their education at our partner school, the Unified Learning Center. Students also get health education lessons, well being check ups and receive legal assistance to become documented. Mom thinks educated children are able to get better, high paying jobs and live a more peaceful life where they do not need to be reliant on others. She believes most students want to continue their education after ACME and assists by counseling them on housing options, budgeting, writing letters of recommendation and transcripts. She recognizes that ACME is beneficial to the entire Burmese community because it: offers weekly educational lessons by the local Thai government that allows migrant members to receive an informal educational certificate and then enter an occupational job career, which are safer and pay higher than a typical migrant job.

**Situation in Myanmar:** She cannot get in contact with family because the internet is blocked. She cannot send money to them and is worried that they will not have money to eat food. Teaching and helping the ACME students receive an education gives her comfort and happiness because she is helping the next Myanmar generation gain the ability to make the world a better, more peaceful place. Families have no plan to return to Myanmar and student numbers will stay the same or increase. She believes education is more important than ever during these difficult times.



*GEOGRAPHY HISTORY SOCIAL SCIENCE  
TEACHER*

# DAW HTAY HTAY WIN

Htay is 45 years old and is from Arakan in the Rhakine state of Myanmar. She has lived in Thailand for about seven years. She finished school through 10th grade in Myanmar and always looked up to her teachers with respect and awe. She wanted to follow in their footsteps and become a teacher to assist children in making their life better through knowledge and education. Her family did not have enough money to send her to University to receive a teaching degree, so she began to look for alternative teaching jobs in Thailand to pursue her dream.

She lives within the Burmese community surrounding ACME and her seven year relationship with parents has made her an integral part of ACME's community outreach programs and coordination. She has been a teacher at ACME for five years and teaches geography, history and social science. Htay thinks that migrant children should receive an education because it is important for them to have knowledge that is outside their direct circle of comfort. Education gives children the opportunity to get better, higher paying jobs so they can live a peaceful and safe life in one place. Since she lives in the migrant communities, Htay sees the daily struggle for parents to put food on the table and plan for the future when job security is not guaranteed.

She thinks that ACME is special because it allows students to receive lessons from the Myanmar Ministry of education and transportation is provided. Parents feel the center is a safe place to send their children and are able to work freely knowing their children are safe. The center also provides additional incentives for parents and the Burmese community by providing workshops about migrant rights, providing health checkup and assisting to register and document students. Htay assists with school beautification projects, rides on the school bus to pickup and drop off students and coordinates for parent teacher meetings. Her favorite part of teaching is when she asks students to show completed homework and it is complete, when students can read and do anything correctly she is so proud of students and her teaching.

**Current situation in Myanmar:** Her mother is still in her hometown and she has not been back to visit. She said travel is too expensive and there is not enough time with school breaks to travel. Htay is very upset about the situation in Myanmar and is worried about her mother's safety and well being as she is unable to send money to her or get in contact with her. She said she is grateful to be living in Thailand, receiving a salary and able to continue teaching. Htay speaks with her migrant community neighbors everyday and they have no intention of trying to return to Myanmar during these unsafe times. Families are struggling from the effects of Covid and do not have money to travel to other areas in Thailand to find jobs. This means that ACME student numbers are expected to remain the same or even increase.



THAI LANGUAGE TEACHER

# PIRAMPON YALE

Tar is 29 years old and is from Kuraburi, Thailand. She graduated from the University Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University with an education degree. She wanted to be a teacher to pass along knowledge to the younger generation. Tar has been working at ACME for 9 years and she teaches Thai language and writing. Tar handles administration for center, coordinates with international student groups, handles daily tasks, assists with facilitation between Thai government offices and the center. She will continue to teach at the center for as long as it stays open.

She has a passion for migrant children's rights and feels that education is the key to breaking the cycle of migrant poverty. If migrant children receive an education, they have the opportunity for better jobs and can earn an independent income. At ACME, children can have contact with volunteers and have more knowledge about the world. They can have contact with other students and people outside of their surrounding migrant community, allowing for a better understanding of the world. At ACME, students learn how to interact and have confidence with other people, which can benefit them in the future when staying in Thailand.

She likes that the center offers additional programs and projects like: healthy living training, IT training, sports days and educational celebrations. When going on homes visits, she has learned that families send their children to ACME because it is close and safe. The community also likes to use the center for gatherings and celebrations. Tar thinks that ACME is extremely unique and tailored to the specific needs of the migrant community. Students are able to receive an education that is applicable and transferrable to both Thai and Myanmar schools. Tar helps students continue their education and assists with the "Thai logistics" such as housing and food when a student transfers. Her favorite part of teaching is seeing the excitement on student's faces when they learn something new.