

July 2020

## SUCCESS STORY:

### Silk Craft Project Supports Livelihoods for Artisans During Covid-19



Pragma trainee, Zar Zar Htwe, displaying one of her silk products at her home in Chin State

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, artisans from across Myanmar have seen their livelihoods reduced as markets have closed, cutting them off from both local and international customers.

Throughout the crisis, Pragma Ventures' Silk Craft project, with support from the UK aid-funded DaNa Facility, has continued to work with silk weavers, enabling them to earn stable incomes during uncertain times.

The project aims to revitalise the Myanmar silk industry through mulberry farm gate activities in Chin State and the launch of a weaving studio in Yangon. As part of the project, Pragma provides training sessions covering every aspect of silk weaving, from setting up looms to quality control.

Zar Zar Htwe, a 27-year-old weaver from Chin State, has been training with the project since mid-2019. Although she had been weaving for over 16 years, this was her first experience working with silk. With support and

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guidance from Pragma's expert trainers, Zar Zar has become an accomplished silk weaver, mastering the art.

Ma Lin, Training Manager at Pragma, has been impressed by how well the trainees have been able to learn new skills.

"At my first training programme I was a little bit worried about whether the weavers would be able to make high-quality products. I encouraged them and our company provided yarn so they could practice. Since February 2020 the trainees have been producing better quality products one batch after another," said Ma Lin.

Since training with Pragma, Zar Zar has been able to increase her monthly income by over 25%, from 280,000 Kyats (£160) to 360,000 Kyats (£205).

"Before working with Pragma, I bought all the raw materials myself, weaved the products, and sold them to wholesalers. My income was just enough to put food on the table and to buy medicine for my parents. Through working with Pragma, I've been able to start saving," said Zar Zar.

The project has trained 84 women to date and plans to double that number over the next 12 months. Two of Zar Zar's cousins were recently made unemployed and had to return home to Chin State – Zar Zar is encouraging them to train with Pragma.

The Pragma project is committed to carrying on its work to support artisans during the Covid-19 crisis, providing much-needed stability during these uncertain times.