

Songpinong

Songpinong is a rural village tucked away in the mountains of Northern Thailand. Home to four distinct groups of Lahu and Akha people, it is rich in traditions and culture. However, many villagers lack access to basic rights such as education, health care and freedom of movement.

Women for Change

Women in Songpinong took part in the Women for Change project to research domestic violence in their area. They found that if a woman is in a violent relationship and has no money, no work, and no support network, then she has no way out. They started the textiles group to become more financially independent, and to support one another.



Songpinong Textiles

A Lahu Women's
Project

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center4girls.org/what-we-
do/programs/women-for-change



Mali's Story

"I fled to Thailand with my two daughters because my husband abused me. Every time he hurt me I was severely wounded. Sometimes I was knocked unconscious. When I came here I hoped I would be safe. I joined the Women for Change project to gain knowledge and skills so that I could make some money to take care of my children and family. I'm very glad that I can now make and sell beautiful bags, and that I have new friends who I can talk to and help one another."

The Bags

Bags are made using traditional Lahu and Akha techniques and designs. The straps are woven on a loom, and the bag designs are created using a technique involving intricate fabric folds, inversions, and hand-stitching, along with sewing machines stitch patterns. The designs have been passed down through generations, and are specific to the tribe. Each bag takes about four days to complete.



The Impact

Learning these techniques keeps Lahu tradition thriving and valuable in the community. Profits generated by the small enterprise are used to bolster the women's financial independence, promote their safety and well-being, and support their children's education, increasing autonomy and opportunity in the community for present and future generations.