

THAILAND

Manee

MANEE'S STRUGGLE

A BOOKLET DEVELOPED AT THE WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR DEVELOPMENT OF READING MATERIALS
FOR WOMEN'S SELF-RELIANCE

(Chiangmai, Thailand, 17 July - 2 August 1991)

Text : Wisanee Siltragool

Illustration : Sanong Tungchoo



UNESCO PRINCIPAL REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
BANGKOK

© UNESCO 1992

Published by the
Unesco Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
P.O. Box 967, Prakanong Post Office
Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Printed in Thailand

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Unesco concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

PREFACE

You have before you one in a series of 17 booklets produced at UNESCO's Workshop on Reading Materials for Women's Self-reliance held in Chiangmai, Thailand (17 July - 2 August 1991).

The 17 short stories show the work done by Asian and Pacific women in and outside their homes, with remuneration or unpaid. All point to one simple truth - to recognize a woman's work, while being possibly chores or even mechanical routinized actions, is to recognize her value. The authors want to cause women to feel their self-worth and at the same time, to raise society's appreciation of their contribution to its survival and progress.

The process of designing and developing the booklets involved the following steps:

The writing of the booklets began well before the Workshop. Participants were asked to look for communities in which substantial number of women would have limited reading skills. Women's needs in these communities were exhaustively and sensitively studied. Problems facing them were arranged according to priorities. Of these, only one work-related problem was to be selected.

The process continued at the workshop. The beginning days brought about better understanding of gender issues and dedication to the idea of women's progress in society. Participants learned how to design booklets to meet special needs of readers with limited reading skills. They had ample opportunity to examine samples of reading materials and determined themselves what should be included and avoided in this class of texts for women.

This booklet, in English, is intended to generate exchange between readers and authors. Readers are to remember that it is a result of a two-week workshop and numerous constraints had their effect on the text's quality. Nevertheless, the merits of the product must not be underestimated. The stories are offered as examples of one particular way to treat the vast domains related to the special needs of women. Certainly, the books are not without flaws. But readers are encouraged to use these flaws as samples of things to be avoided in future writing for women. They are kept to show that methods used in producing texts for women are to be constantly adjusted and refined in particular, to correspond to specific socio-cultural scenarios.

We believed in the importance of the process described above and offer a booklet plan at the beginning of each story. The plan was made during the needs assessment phase, i.e. before the workshop. This is to dismiss the belief that anything written for semi-literates is done on an ad hoc basis.

We hope these stories would cause readers, in the same way as they did the authors, to see the overload of responsibilities assumed by rural women everywhere. The idea behind the texts is clear. Women's contribution must be recognized because it embodies their worth. It is this self-worth which constitutes the basis on which women could build a dignified life.

OUTLINE

Title :

Manee's Struggle

General objective :

To improve women's ability to solve problems and manage family survival.

Specific objectives :

- To teach women decision-making skills.
- To encourage women to be positive in difficult family situations.
- To make women feel that self-reliance in every family-member is important

Summary :

Manee has big problems in her family. Their farmland does not produce crops and her husband wants to go to work in Bangkok.

A friend encourages them to take jobs in a brick factory in a nearby town. The family moves to town, works hard and saves some money. All of a sudden, Manee's husband takes to drinking.

Using clever tactics, Manee manages to save the family. She hopes her way of managing family crises would be a good example to her children.

Message :

Women must recognize their importance in managing their families. They must appreciate their own contribution to family's well-being since they carry a double responsibility. They must develop abilities to take decisions, communicate effectively with husbands and provide their children with good advice.

Illustrations :

Pictures show the agony of Manee's family and the slow change for the better. Manee is present in every scene. In the end, family reunion is shown while the final text sums up Manee's struggle.

At Bankoke village far from everywhere, there had been no rain for years. People could not grow anything. They began to be indebted.



Manee, Pol and their three children were facing the same problem as did other people.



Dao, the eldest daughter, already finished primary school. She still could not find a job to help the family.



That night Manee thought hard. Was it time the family fell apart? The husband went one way. The daughter went another. . .



Two days later, Aunt Sai, who had gone away from the village long ago, came back with good news.



Manee and Pol asked for more details. There were some good points about working there. The more they worked, the more they would get. The factory gave a place to stay. So their children could come too. Electricity and water would be free.



Manee and Pol discussed for a long time. Then they decided to move to a brick factory. Manee was confident that if everybody was diligent, patient and helped each other, everything would be better.



Manee and her family moved to Ayudhya. They did not waste time. They started to work immediately.



Manee, Pol and Dao learned to make bricks. It was not too difficult for people who wanted to learn and tried to do it.



A few months later, everything was getting better. They lived economically. They caught fish from the pond. They picked vegetables from the field and the forest nearby.

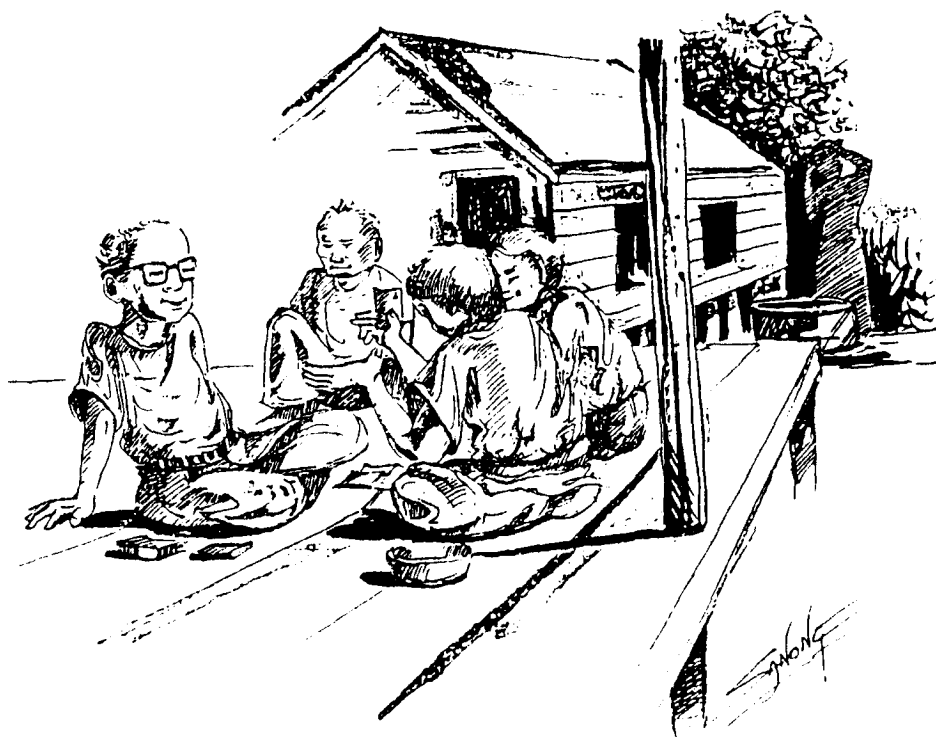


From months to years, Manee's family was not as poor as before. They saved some money. Then one day . . .



As time passed, Pol started to change. Whenever he got money, he got drunk. Sometimes, he sneaked out to gamble. He bought illegal lottery tickets. What else would he do next; cock fighting, gambling on boxing matches?

Poor Manee! What could she do?



Changes occurred not only to her husband but also to her daughter, Dao. She started to make up her face and wear lipstick. She sneaked out to flirt with a young man who lived nearby.

Manee was so worried about her husband and her daughter.



Manee observed them for many days. She did not know what to do. It was no use complaining and blaming them. If she did so, it might get even worse, but if she did not do anything it might also lead to great trouble. Finally, Manee decided.

IT'S BETTER TO DO
IT IN A GENTLE,
MORE SUBTLE WAY...



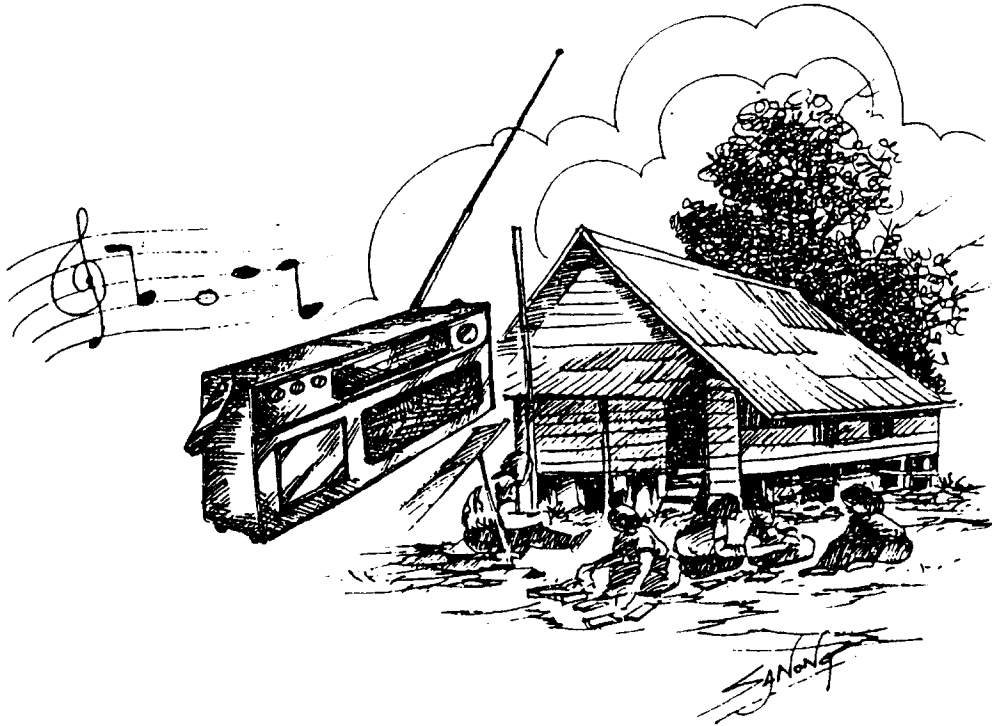
Manee requested Pol not to drink. She asked him to help look after Dao; Manee consulted him more often about work and saving money to pay for their land. Pol seemed to be more important, indeed!



Manee noticed that the father and children were getting closer and more concerned about each other. They talked and played together. Manee felt happier.

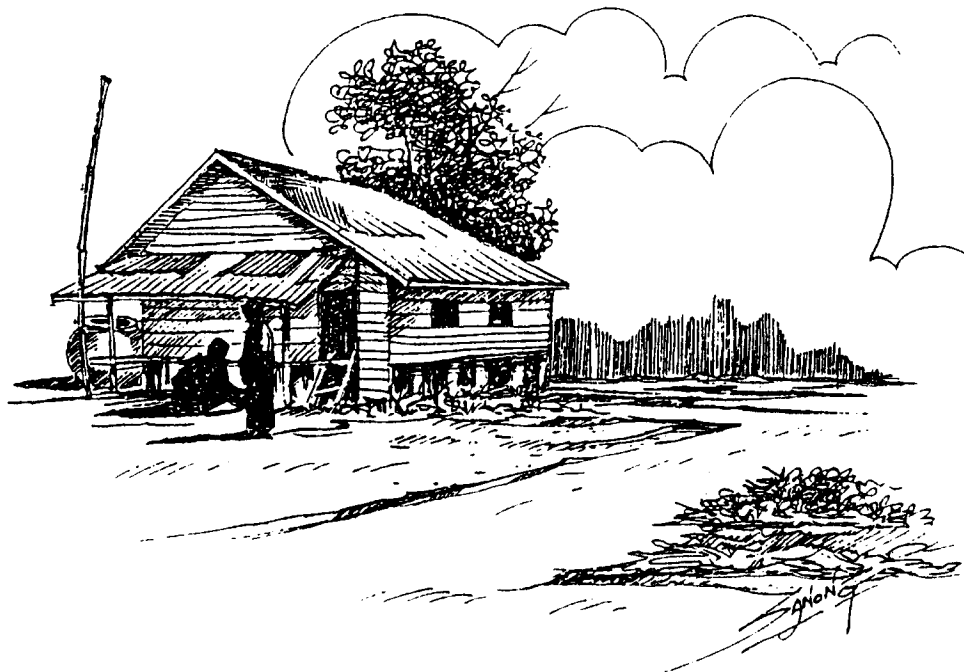


From her past experiences, Manee had learned that being a good mother was really hard. She had to handle many things: work, money, husband and children. She had also learned that she alone could not manage everything. Everybody had to help and share in working and solving problems. Then the family would be happy.



Manee still has a long struggle in the future. She also has a long road to travel. We hope that such a strong woman will be successful.

Good Luck Manee...



Questions

- 1. What are the reasons Manee moved to a brick factory? Do you agree with her? Would you have done the same thing? Why?**
- 2. What are the reasons you took your present job?**
- 3. If your husband gets drunk, what will you do? Why?**
- 4. What does it mean for a woman to be successful?**
- 5. How can a woman be successful in her life?**

Facilitator's Guides

Objective of the booklet

To motivate village women to be aware of their important roles in work and family management.

How to use this booklet

- a) **It is to be used among target women. Copies are also to be placed in village reading centres.**
- b) **The facilitator will read the story with the women who sit in a group. Then the women will read among themselves.**
- c) **The facilitator will read out the questions presented in the book and discuss them with the women.**
- d) **The facilitator should motivate the women to continue reading and sharing ideas with their family members.**