



*Project code 016*

## BANKONTHIP

### Sewing and Tailoring School

#### CONTESTO

The AMICI Betharram Onlus Association supports the Holy Family Catholic Center, a center founded in 1972 in Ban Pong, in northern Thailand, in the province of Chiang Rai, where the Akha ethnic group lives.

In the last decades, Thai society has undergone a rapid transformation and, as a consequence, the ethnic minorities have been losing their identity.

The Akha tribe have always lived isolated in the forest in a self-supporting system; but in past decades the situation has changed with rampant deforestation and contact with the rest of the world, thanks to new roads and new media communication.

The villages are located on the mountain ridges, on steep slopes at altitudes between 1,000 and 1,400 m.

The best way to help these people is to educate the new generation, to meet with the society in which they will have to live, providing education, at least basic, and facilitating their insertion into the world of work.

For this reason, **Bankonthip**, the tailoring and sewing school, was created inside the Holy Family Catholic Center in 1996.

#### IL PROGETTO

**Bankonthip** is the name of the cutting and sewing house-laboratory built inside the Holy Family Catholic Center.

A very original and meaningful name:

"Ban" means "home"

"Kon" means "hand"

"Thip" means "special" in the poetic language.

From the beginning, the Center's cardinal points have been training and literacy; but, as theoretical education immediately requires practical application, the laboratory was created with adequate equipment for the production of artistic items with hand-made and embroidered fabrics.

The young girls learn to make clothes, including liturgical vestments, bags and handicrafts.

After completing the training, the young girls can find work in the tailor's shops of the city, where they are appreciated for their ability.

In their free time, schoolchildren and girls embroider and earn some money to meet their personal needs and also to help their family.



The embroidery work then extended to families. The Center offers the material and training and markets the finished product; groups of women and students of nearby villages are also involved.

Akha women are very skilled in embroidery and feel valued if they can earn something with their art.

Furthermore, in the art of embroidery, the pupil discovers and manifests their own culture, their inner wealth, their personality.

It's an added value to the work done in an atmosphere of joy: with work you create happiness and the girls who study say: ***"with our embroideries and decorations we wish to increase the joy for those who sell them and for those who wear them"***.

The workshop, as well as a workplace, becomes a time of integral training of the person: it's here where the unmistakable lifestyle of the Center is born and flourishes, the originality and validity of a truly unique training and educational experience.

**At the Center they live a simple life, in harmony with the environment, without making too big projects but trying to do the best possible day after day, based on a feeling of mutual brotherhood.**

Over the years the Center has received numerous distinguished visits from regional governors and ministers, as well as from the Thai royal family itself.

The workshop's handmade creations are highly appreciated by the authorities, who advertise the products by sending groups of visitors.

This work is directed by Suwaraporn Yindeengarm "Noy", with the help of some teachers.

At the end of their training, some girls decide also to stay at the Center to in turn transmit to the younger girls what they have learned, thus making their contribution in the management of the Centre.

In addition to the workshop, there is also a shop where the products made in Bankonhtip are displayed.