



Japan-ASEAN Cooperation



Insights
from ASEAN Hometown Improvement
Project

Towards Improved Practice





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Towards Improved Practice



The Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) is a regional center on disability and development established in Bangkok, Thailand as a legacy of the Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002, with joint collaboration of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of the Royal Thai Government, Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Government of Japan. It is managed by the APCD Foundation under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

APCD is identified by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) as the regional center on disability for the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real, 2013-2022, and with a mission to promote a barrier-free, inclusive and rights-based society for all through the empowerment of persons with disabilities and disabled people's organizations in Asia-Pacific.

'Leave No One Behind'

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FOREWORD

The "Leave No One Behind" commitment, a key feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is a concept that when applied in the context of disability-inclusive business development is a rallying call to the Asia-Pacific region. After many years of advocating for the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities — and despite the many challenges still — we are seeing remarkable changes, thanks to the concerted and persistent efforts of disability rights advocates like the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD). This publication is one of them.



"Insights from ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project: Towards Improved Practice" is a relevant and timely report that explores the inspiring stories of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region chosen to take part in the Project for 'ASEAN Hometown Improvement through Disability-Inclusive Community Model'. The Project's aim is to uplift the quality of life of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable sectors by empowering them in their own hometowns. This book gives you an in-depth look not only at their challenges, but also their successes and their boundless creativity. The thirst for knowledge is a common theme, as well as their determination to overcome the odds. Best of all is the sense of community and strength of collaboration among many sectors — truly a mark of inclusivity.

I would like to invite you all to take stock of the lessons learned detailed in this report, so that other communities can replicate and further improve on the concept of disability-inclusive business and develop a deep sense of community, as embodied in the good practices from participating hometowns. I am confident that projects like ASEAN Hometown Improvement will be one of the keys for us to truly 'leave no one behind' as we march together towards the full emergence of a barrier-free society for all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tej Bunnag". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light blue background.

Dr. Tej Bunnag
Chairman
Asia-Pacific Development Center
on Disability Foundation
Bangkok, Thailand



MYANMAR

Mushroom Production by Persons with Disabilities with Shwe Minn Tha Foundation

THAILAND

Earthworm Casting and Cactus Farming at Farm D

CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh Center for Independent Living's Bakery by Persons with Disabilities

MALAYSIA

Branding and Marketing Management for Bakery and Handicraft by Persons with Disabilities at CBR Semenyih



ASEAN Hometown

Improvement Project
through Disability-Inclusive
Communities Model



Japan-ASEAN Cooperation
JAPAN

VIETNAM

Fermented Dry Bamboo
Waste Fertilizer
at Bamboo Dana Co. Ltd.

PHILIPPINES

Sustainable Inclusive
Urban Micro-Gardening
and Community-Based
Cooperative at Barangay 177

INDONESIA

Batik Design
and Marketing Management
at Kampung Peduli

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INTRODUCTION

About 15% of the world's population – or more than 1 billion people – is the estimated number of persons living with some form of disability, according to the World Report on Disability conducted by the World Health Organization and the World Bank in 2011. The situation in developing countries for persons with disabilities, especially those living in rural areas, is worse due to the lack of social services, opportunities and resources to support them. In urban areas, meanwhile, issues related to urbanization remain a constant challenge to many people, including persons with disabilities. Some of these challenges include overpopulation, transportation and commuting issues, poverty, general lack of opportunities, and inaccessible services and facilities.

It is in this context that the Project for ASEAN Hometown Improvement through Disability-Inclusive Community Model was conceptualized. The two-year project, conducted from 2017 to 2019, was implemented by Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD), with support from Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and ASEAN Secretariat.

Often referred to as the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, it aimed to tackle challenges emerging from urbanization and the rise of the ageing population in the ASEAN region by attempting timely and relevant improvements to disability-inclusive 'hometowns'. This meant empowering these hometowns by providing increased socio-economic opportunities for all, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, women, children, and other vulnerable groups. More specifically, the project attempted to enhance both ASEAN and, on a wider context, regional connectivity. This is to narrow the development gap in the region through the improvement of disability-inclusive hometowns.

In order for the project to achieve the target of having inclusive hometowns, three approaches were utilized:

- 1) Promotion of an inclusive business through capacity building of persons with disabilities
- 2) Promotion of accessibility features in the community and other public places, as well as to information, communication, and transportation
- 3) Promotion of cooperation with government sector via discussions to find solutions to improve the livelihood of persons with disabilities

The project selected eight countries from the ASEAN region, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam as target countries for project implementation. Choosing the specific hometowns was made possible through consultations with and recommendations from government agencies and Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) as these organizations are familiar with existing situations and available services for persons with disabilities. Initially, the project primarily targeted CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries due to more hardships faced by persons with disabilities compared with their neighboring countries.

Among the main activities conducted for the project were the following: a) Baseline Survey; b) Capacity-Building Training on Disability and Ageing Through Hometown Improvement; c) Development of Guidelines on Hometown Improvement; d) National Workshop on Policy and Development; and e) ASEAN Hometown Improvement Forum. Mid-term and final evaluation reviews and interviews were also conducted, apart from the development of publications and other related materials.

The information detailed in this publication showcases the process and experience of partners and stakeholders in the implementation of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project. As any other large-scale regional projects, challenges abound every step of the way, but so were success stories as the project hummed along. Due to unexpected circumstances, the project was not fully implemented in Lao PDR due to issues in the policy approval process on the project, which affected the project schedule. The Government of Lao PDR, however, welcomed further

discussions about the implementation of projects of a similar nature in future collaboration. They also affirmed that previous collaborations with APCD paved the way for Lao PDR to formulate policies and legal frameworks that empower persons with disabilities and the communities, which are quite similar to ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project goals and objectives.

The sections, arranged per country in alphabetical order, contain the following: Hometown Improvement Project description and backgrounder; Capacity Building Workshop details; Key Partners and Stakeholders; Training Results; Challenges; Framework for Good Practice; and Way Forward.

The ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, if implemented fully and continuously, will not end in the pages of this publication. The project sites continue to finetune and improve from their learning experiences both from the training workshops and on the ground. With legal instruments firmly in place, strengthened partnerships among various sectors, and renewed enthusiasm after the experiences and outcome of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Regional Forum conducted in 7 to 8 March 2019, the beneficiaries of this project have affirmed they will continuously work on finding ways to make this hometown improvement project a success.





CAMBODIA

**PHNOM PENH CENTER FOR
INDEPENDENT LIVING'S BAKERY BY
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Phnom Penh Center for Independent Living's (PPCIL) Bakery by Persons with Disabilities

The Phnom Penh Center for Independent Living (PPCIL) was established in 2007 by Mr. Mey Samith after he completed the Duskin Leadership Training in Japan: A Program for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific Region. This was followed by the first ever Independent Living Seminar in Phnom Penh, which brought together the Independent Living Working Group (ILWG) in 2009, and was attended by more than 130 participants with disabilities from all over the country and with the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth and Rehabilitation (MoSVY). In September 2009, the PPCIL was officially registered at the Ministry of Interior of the Royal Government of Cambodia. The PPCIL espouses the promotion of a “rights-based approach to disability and development aimed at empowering persons with disabilities through the independent living movement”.

PPCIL advocates for disability-inclusive business through its bakery and dried fruits production, a result of Mr. Samith’s Japan training. In March 2014, the Empowerment and Employment Promotion for Disability (EPPD) started with the aim of “promoting the social participation of persons with disabilities via the creation of a business and employment model in the processing and dissemination of agricultural products in and around Phnom Penh”. Through EPPD, PPCIL founded the Kroya Khmer Bakery with state-of-the-art bakery workshop and equipment donated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Partnership Program. The project is implemented by Familiar Co. Ltd. and PPCIL.

From 2014 to 2016, PPCIL underwent training activities in Cambodia and Japan for bakery production, with well-installed baking equipment that has received the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standard. The site is also recognized for its universal design facility accessible for persons with disabilities.

The EEPD project follows four processes: 1) Agriculture Processing/Food Production; 2) Survey; 3) Promoting Job Opportunity; 4) Promoting Barrier-Free Environment. The Kroya Khmer Bakery has the capability to turn agricultural community goods into a variety of products, thus producing such items as cakes and cookies made from cashew nuts, dried fruits, and bread. All products are produced by persons with disabilities including the deaf and wheelchair users.

To be able to get updated information about the employment situation of persons with disabilities in private companies and the living situations of persons with disabilities, PPCIL conducted a survey in and around Phnom Penh. The field research resulted in two important outcomes. Firstly, the field research conducted from home to home enabled PPCIL to learn more about the living conditions and possible bakery employment of persons with disabilities. They found out that 1,841 persons with disabilities didn't have any formal education, and 287 didn't have jobs. They also found that 15 firms they have interviewed and audited were not accessible for persons with disabilities. Secondly, it provided persons with disabilities with a directory and more information about job employment, rehabilitation, and health care services, vocational training centers, and how to access educational and training organizations.

Along with these two processes, through the EEPD, there comes a big opportunity for persons with disabilities to be hired by PPCIL or work as interns at the bakery. Apart from the promotion of job opportunities, the EEPD can also provide life skills training to the staff, refer staff to work at other organizations, and encourage and advise other institutions and companies to employ persons with disabilities through the disability-inclusive business concept.

As a result of all these, the EEPD is able to promote a barrier-free environment by creating accessibility guidelines based on practical experience of the staff. It also paved the way for the creation of an accessibility audit team and for the bakery to be a model of a barrier-free working environment. To date, the Bakery has accessible features including extended width sliding doors; accessible bathroom with appropriate handrails and height of washbowl and toilet paper holder;

efficient production line for wheelchair users; and installed slopes in lieu of steps in the factory. The Bakery also has customized sinks and tables for staff with disabilities, properly fitted heights for tables for wheelchair users, easy-to-use machines and baking equipment, and faucets with flexible tubes and long handles.

WORKSHOP: Capacity Building Training on Product Quality Control and Marketing Management for Bakery and Dried Fruits

In 2018, PPCIL's Kroya Khmer Bakery was chosen to take part in the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) and Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) Project Phase 3, the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project for Cambodia. The goal was to assist the bakery in terms of improved product quality, sales, and marketability, as well as increase job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Prior to joining the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, the bakery business had been experiencing some setbacks, including quick turnover of staff with disabilities for a variety of reasons, inconsistent product quality, and financial limitations.

To further improve the business and fill in gaps in information and knowledge, the APCD conducted a technical workshop on "Product Quality Control and Marketing Management" in collaboration with the Government of Cambodia through the Disability Action Council. It focused on such topics as Food Packaging and Food Labeling; Setting Up Business Plans; Marketing Strategies; Sales and Marketing Plans; and Creation of Employment and Business Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities.

The two-day workshop was attended by 30 participants consisting of 8 PPCIL staff, 5 member of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), and the rest from national and local government offices and agencies including DAC.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

The primary partnerships in the implementation of this hometown project are:

- Government of Cambodia through DAC and MOSVY
- PPCIL & EEPD
- Local government agencies
- Other DPOs
- Training experts
- National and local media

TRAINING RESULTS: Developing New & Robust Marketing Strategies

The training brought back the EEPD team into the drawing board to brainstorm on ideas and recommendations that were brought up during the workshop. Among these is the creation of a marketing strategy, which include thorough market research, as well as product pricing vis-a-vis the business' limitations in staff and technological know-how. Some of the propositions that came out of the planning sessions include the following:

- Use of promotional materials, such as leaflets, brochures, stickers, product displays, etc.
- Creation of high-quality products up to par with competition from local and international market



- Use of social media, i.e. Facebook and Instagram, to promote the bakery products with possibilities of paying for online advertising
- Development and production of other products, such as coffee bread and coffee cakes, and offer it as coffee break snacks in meetings
- Widening the scope of their target audience to include universities, government offices, and other consumer-rich venues.
- Further staff training in the development of new products, including ideas from workshop resource persons on new cookie recipes from Thailand.
- Reviewing the pricing of each bakery products
- Strengthening networks to get more support from various sectors, such as government, embassies, NGOs, etc.
- Find a way to increase funds so they could hire more staff and consistently produce more bakery items

CHALLENGES

Two of the main challenges of the Kroya Khmer Bakery are the lack of funding, which also affects the quick turnover, as well as lack of the number of staff. According to Mr. Mey Samith (Executive Director, PPCIL), his organization is now talking with representatives from certain disability foundations who could help them get some funding so that they can actively promote their products and business.

“Currently, we don’t have enough human resources due to the lack of funding, which also affects our marketing plans. But we are now looking at other options and sources of funding and crowdsourcing, including approaching private



companies for collaboration, getting volunteers from various sectors, and submitting proposals to relevant ministries like the Ministry of Handicrafts and Industry and the Ministry of Commerce for support,” he said.

“We need to build a good relationship and friendship with our network, and be able to expand our products’ reach to a wider market both locally and abroad,” added Mr. Samith. To do the latter, there is a need to address the challenge of low capacity building opportunities and the lack of job matching as per job supply and demand. Thus, such challenges are also affecting the recruitment of new staff.

INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

The mid-term review and evaluation conducted by a group of external evaluators, showed that a year into the implementation some of the target results were not fully achieved due to external factors, including delays in the implementation due to extended consultations among project partners and the need for adjustments in the project timeline. However, some positive developments were noted all throughout the implementation process. Among the positive and promising practices that came out of the project are the following:

- Close and regular consultations with partners and stakeholders in furthering the project
- Full cooperation and commitment between the DAC and PPCIL to work together for the success of the project
- National Workshop on Policy and Development attended by concerned partners and stakeholders from national and local governments
- Development of a Guideline on Hometown Improvement in Cambodia by the DAC, with support on the regional level by APCD’s ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project

- Government commitment to provide legal assistance to PPCIL, if needed, with DAC willing to support PPCIL in terms of processing necessary official documents
- Proper registration of the PPCIL business to pertinent ministries and agencies
- Creativity in package designs, promotions, and overall marketing strategies
- Drafting of a comprehensive business plan for Khmer Kroya

WAY FORWARD

Following the stipulations in its business plan, the Kroya Khmer Bakery hometown improvement project is an ongoing process even as of this writing, with PPCIL staff working so hard to continue what was begun two years ago. Among the agreed consensus among partners and stakeholders to ensure the continuation and sustainability of the Kroya Khmer Bakery are:

- Continuous development of packaging designs that are up to par with current business standards
- Sale and promotion of products to national and international venues
- Purchase of two-wheeled carts for the sale of coffee and cookies
- Scaling up of the EEPD business model
- Creating more job opportunities for persons with disabilities



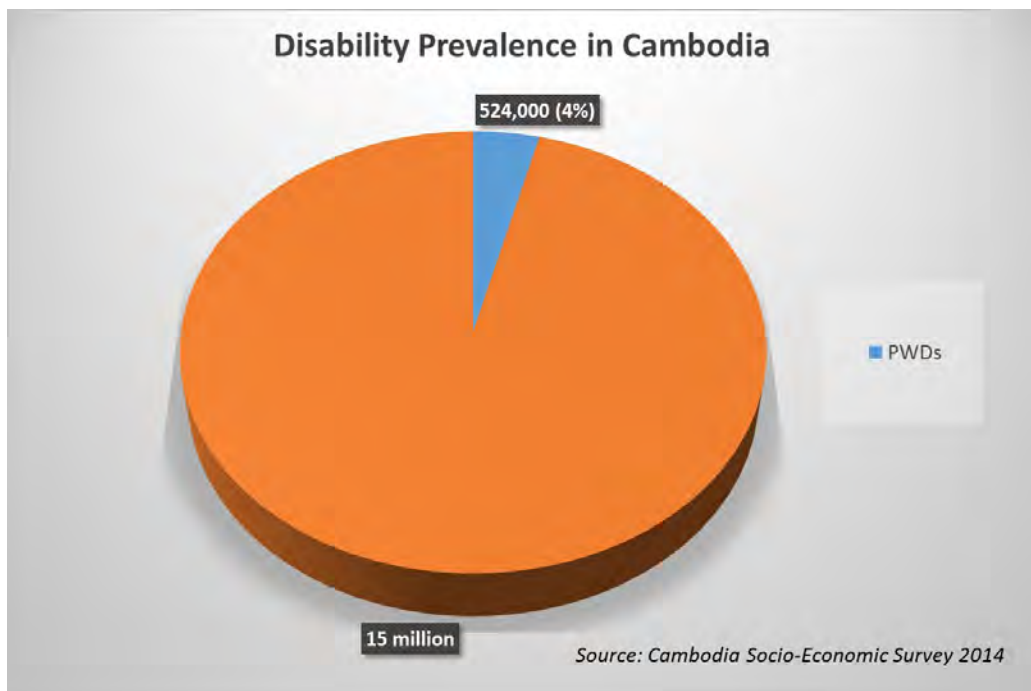


Vision for the Future



“We are very determined to make our products available in the market — Cambodian, ASEAN, even Japan market. But we need to do this step-by-step. First, we need to make our products available in the Cambodian market, for example, in Siem Reap for tourists visiting Angkor Wat. We’d also want to see our products in department stores, supermarkets, souvenir shops, hotels, airports, and Duty Free shops. We still have lots of challenges, mainly funding, which affect the production of our new package design, but there are creative ways to resolve it. There are still lots of things to be done but it can be done. All we want is to let the world know of the ability of persons with disabilities and their contribution to society.” — **Mr. Mey Samith, Executive Director, PPCIL**

DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART









INDONESIA

**BATIK DESIGN AND MARKETING
MANAGEMENT MODEL AT
KAMPUNG PEDULI**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Batik Design and Marketing Management Model at Kampung Peduli

Kampung Peduli (Village Care) shelter workshop, through the Kartini Social Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, is known for its splash batik technique, which is created by the splashing or sprinkling motion of the artist on a fabric using a brush, among other materials. It was set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs as an innovation aimed at “reaching the unreached persons with disabilities” using the Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) approach. It is part of an outreach program implemented by rehabilitation centers in 13 districts across Central and East Java provinces. Implementors of this project are multipronged, including active participation of the family, community, and local government using locally sourced resources. Local social workers play a big role in the Kampung Peduli community as they tirelessly guide members with intellectual disability in the work that needs to be done, even as far as picking them up from their homes, for instance.

Located at Magetan Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia, Kampung Peduli caught the interest of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project partners to see how much of an impact it has in the community. As it already has an established splash batik workshop for persons with disabilities, the aim was to further improve members’ livelihood opportunities and skills development. Furthermore, it also aims to make families and communities aware that persons with intellectual disabilities, with the proper guidance and training, can be independent and are active contributors of society.

Research conducted by the Yogyakarta Social Welfare Research Center in 2009 on “Family Needs for Intellectual Disability Social Services” surveyed family members who had members with disabilities in their household and the results are still worrisome. Statistics showed that 93.9 percent of families with disabled members were in need of social services but did not get any. Some 68.29 percent of families were also not aware of any social service institutions available, while 12.20 percent only heard about the institution name but were not quite sure how

to avail of the services being offered. It was because of these alarming numbers that Kampung Peduli was born. Youths, village officials, community leaders, family members, and persons with intellectual disability are now involved in social rehabilitation activities and capacity building trainings. What's more, self-help groups also sprouted as a result of all these efforts.

According to its implementors, Kampung Peduli follows the following values:

1) Human Resource Development — This is executed by looking at the skills of staff and matching them with what is needed in the production of products. To take it even further, human resource development also needs to ensure the development of quality products and sufficient production capacity.

2) Creation of Local Value Product — This is done by the development of new patterns of batik products based on local elements, both in the technical production and local characteristics that represent the unique qualities of the village. In Kampung Peduli's case, these unique qualities translated into batik design include bamboo, tobacco leaves, papaya leaves, and other patterns.

3) Product Exposure — For a business to be successful, the product needs enough exposure to its target market. For this reason, Kampung Peduli's batik products are introduced and promoted through local cultural festivals, as well as advertised as something useful (e.g. Batik Ciprat products used as costumes for Carnival participants and as uniforms for government staff).

4) Expanding Collaboration and Partnership — Kampung Peduli proponents have found several ways to increase collaborative partnerships with various groups. Among them are pairing up with national batik companies with a goal towards further product development and marketing; building e-commerce ventures with local universities; and mobilizing local youth organizations in the development of hip and attractive product packaging, to name a few.



Wearing Ciprat Batik with Pride

Kampung Peduli is a model of a hometown improvement because it is a community of dynamic people. It is an innovation aimed at empowering persons with disabilities with specific focus on intellectual disabilities because they are the ones mostly left behind. After the training, they have now become more productive and better self-confidence.

Batik is our daily clothing and is in high demand among locals and tourists alike. In fact, batik has such high quality that one ministry ordered 300 batik staff uniforms during a disability day celebration. So, by providing high-quality batik, we are ready to compete with any non-disability company.

The number of government office staff in various offices in Megatan Regency reaches up to 10,000. So that's a big market to tap. An average number of orders that we get for office uniforms is about 50 pieces per order, so yes, we can do bulk orders.

Since batik is used in almost every occasion, even for leisure time, we have some form of 'walking advertisements', which are the people who buy our products, wear them, and when people ask them about it, they would talk about where they got Batik Ciprat and how it was made by persons with disabilities. – ***Ms. Murhardjani, Head, National Center of Persons with Intellectual Disability, BBRSBG (Kartini Temanggung)***



WORKSHOP: Batik Design and Marketing Management

As part of its activities, the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project conducted its capacity building workshop on “Batik Design and Marketing Management” for Kampung Peduli from 30-31 August 2018 with 40 participants consisting of 15 persons with disabilities from the 13 shelters, 13 social workers, and 12 local government officers attending. The training was led by local experts from Precious One, a Jakarta-based company and foundation that creates crafts and other products, and employs persons with hearing disabilities. Among informative topics discussed at the training were quantity and quality products development, unique product design, packaging, and presentation, and marketing strategy development.

As the shelter workshop was originally geared towards rehabilitation, members were very happy to note that they were able to learn more about the importance of marketing strategies and good package design if they wanted to sell more splash batik products. Before the workshop, the center was community-based and financial support from the local government was not sufficient. The shelter workshop also wasn't fully designed according to universal access requirements.

Likewise, in its early stages, the products being produced in the shelter workshop did not have the unique local pattern as it has now and all looked similar to other products.

Thus, when APCD, along with government agencies as DOSR and MOSA and with the help of the Precious One Company which is an expert on design, chose Kampung Peduli as partner of the hometown improvement project, they already had a clear picture of what the community would need — creating livelihood opportunities using high-quality local products and crafts, slowly veering away from the CBR approach and into CBID.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of Indonesia through Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and Department of Social Rehabilitation for People with Disabilities (DOSR)
- Kampung Peduli community
- Local government agencies
- National Rehabilitation Centers for Intellectual Disability (BBRSBG Kartini Temanggung)
- DPOs
- Experts from Precious One

TRAINING RESULTS: Making a Splash with Batik Ciprat and Other Creative Designs

More than 90% of workshop participants gave a thumbs-up to the two-day capacity building training workshop, saying they were satisfied with the training and deemed what they learned relevant and useful to what they are doing.

The training created a huge amount of enthusiasm among the Kampung Peduli members in that they suddenly saw the potential of their new-found learning and skills. As soon as the training ended, they met to review their objectives and to see how they can best produce more high-quality products and market them well. They realize that they are not just “killing time” anymore and ending up achieving nothing substantial. They understood that they need to work together and make the best of local village materials and structure. The social workers, too, made a big effort to meet with families who have members with intellectual disabilities and make them understand that their children have so much potential in terms of ability. Soon enough, parents started sending their children to the

shelter workshop currently situated in the village hall to be trained. Those who can't access the hall due to accessibility limitations began producing batik items in their homes, which were then delivered to the hall afterwards.

Using what they have learned from the workshop, Kampung Peduli members developed a business model following the “One Village, One Product” concept. The following are training highlights:

1) Creation of New, Varied Products

It is important to identify potential villages and persons with intellectual disabilities who could contribute to the design creation and production of new batik products in the village. Thus, social workers doubled their efforts to spread information about the project to families who have members with intellectual and other types of disabilities who could join Kampung Peduli.

The development of various batik products is also a must. After the training, Kampung Peduli members were able to develop new patterns in their batik designs. Previously, they were just producing basic dotted designs using the brush. After the workshop, however, they came up with three new patterns — Gepyokan (Starburst), Lurikan (Lines/Streaks), and Meteor. The latter is the most in-demand Batik Ciprat design thus far, with a continuous order of 300 sheets from September 2018-January 2019.

In terms of packaging design, they have Mika cylinders, plastic, and paper box.

Branding is not too much of a problem as batik designs in different districts and provinces are quite distinct. Kampung Peduli has already established its Batik Ciprat branding and it is just a matter of fine-tuning the whole look and package.

2) Marketing Strategy

The first thing Kampung Peduli members had to determine was its target markets ranging from the local, national, and international/global levels. Market analysis and sound marketing methods are also very important components in their new business model.

Although they have increased their production capacity, their target market is still the district, but keeping in mind that they need the ability to expand and develop their products. Currently, they are trying to learn more about the batik business and how to up their standards through exchange learnings with other establishments — not as competitors but as potential future partners. Efforts to organize their inventory and accounting books have also begun. A profit-sharing scheme is also in place, with 50% from the share used as capital, 30% for salaries, and 10% for practical purposes, such as health care if a member gets sick.

In terms of promotion, they have put up their online selling business via their official Facebook and Instagram pages. Both platforms are doing well and they have attracted customers as far as Malaysia and Taiwan. As for exposure, they are actively present in trade fairs and exhibits, as well as direct selling. They are proud ‘walking advertisers’ of their products as they wear their batik design proudly at every opportunity. According to Kampung Peduli leaders, bulk orders have increased up to 200-300 pieces per month, while monthly production has increased from 10 to 50 as of October 2018.

3) Building Network and Partnerships

Various factors are at play under network and partnership building. Among these are a) expansion of business networks and product development; b) policy support; c) increased product competitiveness; and d) involvement of multi-stakeholders.

All of these are being seen in the way they are attracting the attention of various sectors both public and private on the importance and aesthetic values of their batik products. Continuous product research and development are being done with the help of business and government partners, resulting in product competitiveness. The creation of the National Guidelines was also a big boost to Kampung Peduli's mission and vision as now they have the support of the government. Being able to get the cooperation of various stakeholders from the very basic unit of the family, the village community, and up to the national level will make a huge difference in the success of the project.

CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges Kampung Peduli has to contend with is how to maintain the consistency and the performance quality of its members. This challenge is all too real when it involves persons with intellectual disability who are prone to having unpredictable moods all throughout the day.

Another challenge happens when officials in government institutions are replaced through transfer or election. New leadership usually means new policies with old ones being discontinued or replaced.

The recruitment of facilitators most of whom are social workers is another issue. The number of people who work as social workers is very small because they are paid low wages. Social workers are usually the focal point on the village level for MOSA and are tasked to support persons with disabilities. The problem is these social workers are only paid once every three months and so, their numbers are dwindling.

Last but not least, there is still a need for further capacity-building for persons with disabilities in the village, as well as their trainers especially when it came to trying out new technology.

INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

The active involvement and close coordination among government agencies, self-help groups in the community, and the village community is one of the good practices observed in the Kampung Peduli project. This is also an important ingredient in the project's sustainability.

According to Kampung Peduli leaders, the local government has been very active in promoting and facilitating inclusive economic development policies and programs. Meanwhile, the central government is also actively helping MoSA through its rehabilitation center that initiated Kampung Peduli to “reach the unreached persons with disabilities” using the CBID approach.

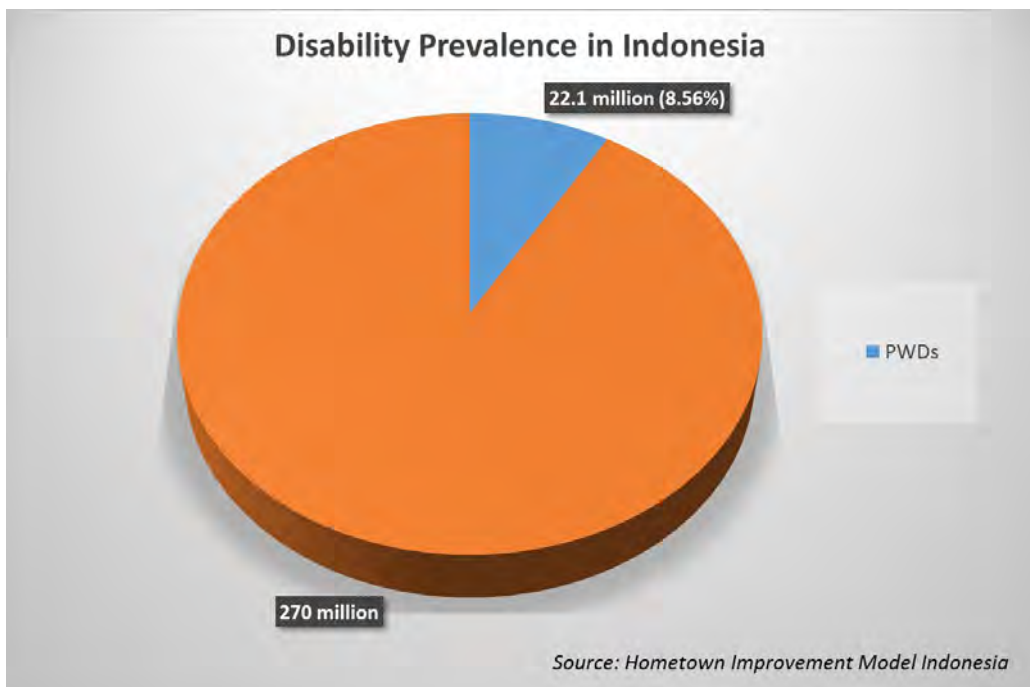
As for self-help groups, they are creatively approaching the issue in several ways, including networking with community leaders and local government to immerse themselves in their own local culture and traditions and rediscover their potential. They are also keen on strengthening the multi-stakeholder partnerships by regular meetings and dialogues.

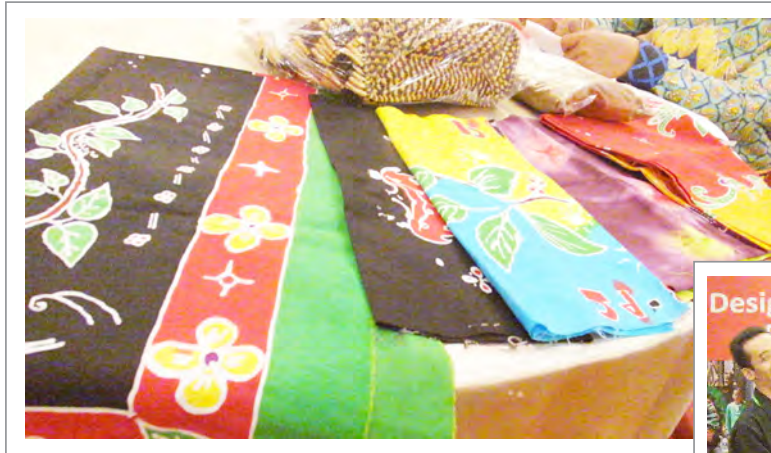
The negative perception about persons with intellectual disability has begun to change due to the increased productivity of the project and economic improvement in the community. In fact, there is now a movement towards the creation of an inclusive community.

WAY FORWARD

The Kampung Peduli has stumbled upon a model that works and they are keen on continuing the positive activities they have started. They said they will continue to promote Batik Ciprat — along with new designs — to the public with the new packaging and labels. Expansion of their market is in the works and they have begun to also promote the product through the local radio. They will also coordinate more with local government, expand production, source additional tools, and develop new skills. They are also working towards the opening of their new showroom in the village where they can showcase the whole range of Batik Ciprat products.

DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART









MALAYSIA

**BRANDING AND MARKETING
MANAGEMENT FOR BAKERY AND
HANDICRAFT BY PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES AT CBR SEMENYIH**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Branding and Marketing Management for Bakery and Handicraft by Persons with Disabilities at CBR Semeniyh

Branding and Marketing Management for Bakery and Handicraft Products by Persons with Disabilities at CBR Semeniyh (also locally known as PDK Semeniyh) is a center offering education and rehabilitation programs and activities for children with disabilities. Before joining the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, the Center was already producing and selling a variety of products but the packaging was not really good.

CBR Semeniyh, located 40 kilometers from Malaysia's capital city of Kuala Lumpur, was established in 1996 is a center offering rehabilitation and education programs for children with disabilities. The 85 persons with disabilities in the Center are managed by 1 supervisor, 9 assistants, and 15 committee members. Even before it was chosen as an ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project for Malaysia, CBR Semeniyh has already been engaged in entrepreneurship selling food products and craft items from its workshops. In 2016, it was selected as Product Champ of the Welfare Department's Open Day 2016.

As a hometown improvement project, CBR Semeniyh is fully supported by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) of the Department for Development of Persons with Disabilities (DDPD) Malaysia. According to the mid-term evaluation results, the project's strongest point is the close cooperation between government agencies, DPOs and other related agencies, including the Art Academy and University of Malaysia, and CBR Semeniyh. Furthermore, based on the baseline survey and observation, the Center's facilities are well-designed and followed universal access principles beneficial for persons with diverse disabilities.

Among CBR Semenyih's products on sale are cordial, button art, key chains, cookies, cassava chips, traditional Malaysian ice cream, natural juices such as lemongrass and butterfly pea, to name some. These products are being promoted within the local community but are starting to get the attention of other areas in Malaysia, as well.

The Center advocates training based on four steps — Product Development, Branding/Labeling, Packaging, and Marketing. Trainees with disabilities are trained on these four aspects after which they could go and do things on their own using what they've learned at CBR Semenyih.

WORKSHOP: Branding and Marketing Management for Handicraft and Bakery Business

Before the workshop, CBR Semenyih had already been producing food products and handicrafts. While the products are quite good, what was lacking was good packaging and attractive labeling. With much-needed product improvements, CBR Semenyih was selected to take part in the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project because this local community already has an established disability-inclusive business scheme that they have been implementing with persons with disabilities.

The workshop, aimed at empowering and promoting CBR Semenyih's business through the development of entrepreneurial skills among persons with disabilities, drew 36 participants, consisting of 10 persons with disabilities, 9 CBR trainers, 22 DDPD officers, and 6 local government officers.

Among the many skills participants learned during the workshop were improving the quality of current products and creating a new bakery product promoting local ingredients. This resulted in the invention of shrimp cookies and Sarawak pepper products, for example. Other topics discussed were value creation, branding strategy, marketing management for an inclusive hometown, community marketing strategy, and package design.



Holistic Approach to Values and Skills Formation

Trust and commitment plus hard work are values that we need to develop in these kinds of disability-inclusive business, because these are what will drive consistency and sustainability, which will eventually lead to success. On more practical matters, market research needs to be put in place. We should know what other people want to buy. We need to have foresight. For example, we need to anticipate customer demand and have the ingredients ready. We had one program activity once where huge crowds came in and all the 100 bottles of beverages we were selling got sold out within 3 hours.

I feel entrepreneurs with disabilities need to understand the whole process of the business — from skills development and research and down to knowing how much ingredients to stock up on. Admittedly, there are still weaknesses in all stages of the process and we are trying to bridge those gaps. It should be a holistic approach and the end goal is not just for profit. Each one has to be an entrepreneur, aware of the whole process from beginning to end as they need to be overseeing the business and, thus, need to know everything. – **Dr. Lee Keok Cheong, Adviser, CBR Semenyih**



KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of Malaysia through Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) and the Department for Development of Persons with Disabilities (DDPD)
- CBR Semenyih
- Local government agencies
- DPOs
- Resource persons/experts from Thailand

TRAINING RESULTS: Creative Innovation Wins the Game

More than 90% of training participants gave very positive reviews about the workshops on bakery and handcraft product design, as these were adjudged relevant and useful to their work. From just being a rehabilitation and education center focusing on skills development, social aspects, education, and advocacy, CBR Semenyih members started to see future possibilities with focus on economic aspects.

Concrete workshop results included the development of new products and fresh branding. While they have improved their labels and package design soon after the training, the process is still ongoing because the project started only in October 2018, a much later start compared to other hometown improvement projects in the region.

Succeeding in-situ trainings focused on groupings composed of members who could do specific crafts and products. Product sourcing is not just about purchasing

ingredients; they also formed a separate group who would be planting ingredients (i.e. butterfly pea, lemongrass) for their beverage line.

The Center also looked into determining which products to sell to particular target areas in the country as part of their marketing strategy. For example, they decided to sell their butterfly pea beverages to areas that don't have the drinks ensuring a captive market as there are no competitors.

The labeling and packaging development process and research are ongoing as well with assistance from external resource persons.

Another marketing strategy that they have started is to promote the products during special occasions and activities, as well as to make high-profile guests from the government aware of the product. A good example was when the Deputy Prime Minister visited the Center for a special program, which resulted in such high-level government officials publicly trying out the product as a form of indirect endorsement — an effective promotional activity, as they soon found out when sales spiked up after said event.

Persons with disabilities are very appreciative of the products. Even parents say that they want their children there because they see a future for their kids in the Center.

CHALLENGES

Among the challenges that were noted are the following:

- Consistency in the acquisition of skills and knowledge due to the various degrees and types of disabilities, including slow learners, autism, and cerebral palsy.
- Still more work is needed to be done in terms of labels and packaging design, as well as marketing.

- Inconsistency in focus and emotional states of workers
- Sustainably matching supply versus demand
- The need for more trainees to be able to produce more products via recruitment of slow learners who left school early and are looking for a job. In exchange for their assistance in the Center, they will be given on-the-job training for 6 months after which they will have to find their employment outside. If they are unsuccessful, they can go back for an interview and, if they passed, they will be hired and paid accordingly as employees.

INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

The willingness and enthusiasm of CBR Semenyih members to improve on their products and sales by undergoing continuous capacity building trainings are good ways to sustain this disability-inclusive business venture. Furthermore, worth noting is the support of CBR Semenyih committee and local government members, as well as related local agencies, will result in the effective marketing of products made by persons with disabilities.

The creation of the National Policy Guidelines, reiterating the Malaysian government's support and recognition of the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities, lends sustainability and strength to the CBR Semenyih hometown improvement project.

To quote Dato' Maria Bernard Sinsoi (Director, Department for Development of Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development), "The Department was instrumental in identifying CBR Semenyih for this project with a view towards its replication and expansion to other CBR centers in the area. Persons with disabilities have gained knowledge, which they

can share with others, especially in marketing strategies and product innovation and creativity. These are good ways to show society the huge potential of persons with disabilities and contribute to their respective communities.”

Having a dynamic, forward-looking, and innovative team running the CBR Semenyih program, along with ample support from external resource persons, will bring positive changes and economic improvement to the organization and its individual members.

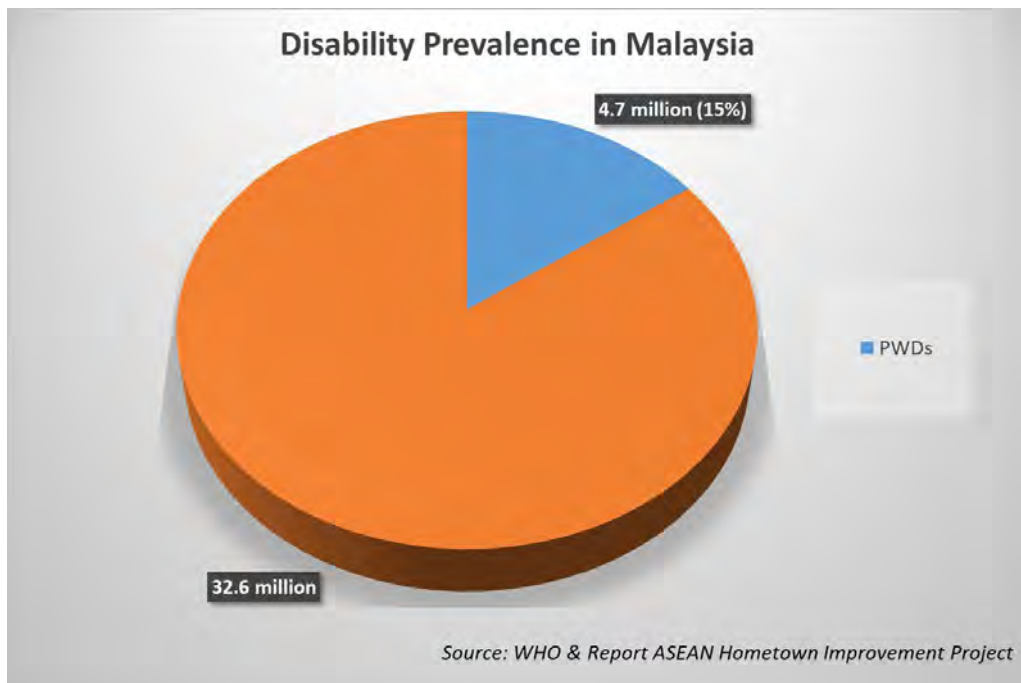
Constant product innovation and marketing strategy review, with a pulse for public needs and demands, are also good principles to follow.

WAY FORWARD

- Focus on coming out with marketing strategy
- Try to match the business plan with Sustainable Development Goals if we want to go global/ international
- Include environment-friendly concepts, i.e. no plastic use/create and use paper bags, and no food wastage in business plan
- Work closely with government in expanding the model to other CBR and Independent Living Centers, and come up with projects that further empower persons with disabilities that will result in improved quality of life



DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART









MYANMAR

**MUSHROOM PRODUCTION BY
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WITH
SHWE MINN THA FOUNDATION**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Mushroom Production by Persons with Disabilities with Shwe Minn Tha Foundation

According to the 2014 Census Report, the Ayeyarwady Region in Myanmar has the highest prevalence of disability, mostly living in rural areas. In fact, 4.6% of the 51 million population of Myanmar are persons with disabilities, majority of whom have visual disabilities at 54.1%, followed by physical disabilities with 44.4%.

Mushroom production in Patheingyi in the Ayeyarwady Region was chosen as a hometown improvement project for several reasons:

- There's no need for much capital.
- The business can be a home-based venture.
- It has a market.
- It only requires a small space.
- It is inclusive as all types of persons with disabilities can do it.

After the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and APCD signed the agreement to launch the hometown improvement project in Patheingyi, with the full support of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) and the Department of Social Welfare, they chose the Shwe Minn Tha Foundation (SMTF) as the implementation agency of said project. This was due to the following criteria that SMTF was able to meet:

- SMTF is a strong DPO ably representing persons with disabilities.
- SMTF is a registered DPO.
- SMTF is a well-established organization with 48 employees, 14 (29%) of which are persons with disabilities.
- SMTF is experienced in running businesses having several ventures, such as printing services, car services, and real estate services.

SMTF President Mr. Myat Thu Winn, an expert in the field being an entrepreneur with disability, established his own company, Shwe Minn Tha Enterprises Ltd. Co., in 1993. He is also General Secretary of Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities, and Joint Secretary of the National Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

According to SMTF, entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities is still not a popular concept due to the lack of trainings and economic opportunities, education, and general confidence among the disability community. This is what SMTF and other disability-inclusive business advocates would like to change because they believe that disability entrepreneurship is very important for the economic development and improved quality of life for persons with disabilities.

At the beginning of the mushroom cultivation business, SMTF provided some 20,000 mushrooms and some loans to the community. They also trained about 120 participants on mushroom farming and cultivation, and encouraged other members of the community to get more involved. At that time, there wasn't much support from the government due to the lack of general public awareness as it began as a backyard household business. With APCD's ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project coming in, the mushroom business began getting the attention it needed previously.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of Myanmar through Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR), Department of Social Welfare – Ayeyawaddy Region (DSWAR), Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
- Shwe Minn Tha Foundation
- Local DPOs
- Chiang Mai Rajamangala University experts/resource persons

WORKSHOP: Mushroom Post - Harvesting Technology and Food Processing

The workshop on post-harvesting technology and food processing was conducted to address a need among the mushroom farmers for sustainability and product expansion of their harvests. Before the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project came in, there were still so many gaps in information and knowledge, as well as post-harvest technology skills that they needed to learn if their business ventures were to survive. Among the many gaps present at the time were the community misconceptions and lack of awareness about the different types of mushrooms, identifying the edible ones from the poisonous ones, and the seasons for mushroom growing, to name a few.

At the time, mushroom businesses in Pathein were very small and few. Initially, SMTF was only able to provide employment for 4 persons with disabilities in the mushroom business. It then encouraged people to cultivate mushrooms in their homes because they are not able to bring all persons with disabilities to SMTF offices all at the same time. Thus, home-based mushroom farming was created. Wanting to promote mushroom farming more not only in the community but also in other parts of the country, SMTF requested APCD for technical support on topics like proper mushroom cultivation, packaging, varied mushroom products, among



others. Mushroom byproducts are an important component in the business as the delivery of only fresh mushrooms limits the business and economic potential, as well as consumer interest and market, of the business.

Some specific topics discussed during the workshop include hygiene, proper preparation of mushroom bags, heat sterilization equipment, mushroom house renovation for future, expanded production, mushroom product recipes and samples, and marketing strategies. The training also looked at an expanded market including hotels and restaurants that cater to local and foreign tourists.

Thirty participants, 17 of which were persons with disabilities, attended the workshops. More than 90% of them were quite satisfied with the training, found it relevant and useful.

TRAINING RESULTS: Theory and Practice Equals Learning and Earnings

The two-day training workshop brought enthusiasm to participants as it clarified misconceptions about mushroom and mushroom farming. It also added to their knowledge and helped them creatively think of ways to sell mushroom byproducts, such as mushroom paste, jams, and chips. Follow-up meetings also addressed two important concerns — lack of sanitary conditions and lack of moisture in the mushroom house — which were promptly taken care of with support from partners.

According to SMTF, the workshop helped mushroom farmers combine theory and practical applications of mushroom farming. Among the improvements they have noticed are the following:

- A more systematic approach to mushroom farming as previously, mushroom farming methods and techniques used to be done randomly
- Clarification of misconceptions on mushroom consumption

- Gradual renovation of the mushroom farm incorporating accessibility features for all persons with disabilities
- Increase of employees with disability from 4 to 12, and who are now earning up to 90,000 MMK-120,000 MMK (59 to 79 USD) per month
- Increase in production of mushroom bags at least 12,000 per month now (it used to be very low and so unpredictable)
- Testing of mushroom products and food recipes has also been undertaken by persons with disabilities

As for marketing strategy, they are setting their sights on the rural market and rural community at first as these are the easiest markets to reach. Along with this, they have met with other persons with disabilities, villagers, local market owners and sellers to campaign on mushroom cultivation awareness. Currently, they have already tapped into a limited number of restaurants and local market sellers as regular customers. They are also looking for more funding support from potential donors.

Overall, some impacts are being noted, including increased profits for the SMTF mushroom farm; increased access of livelihood skills training; increased earnings and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities; and increased self-confidence among persons with disabilities and income for the family.

CHALLENGES

Even with improvements, challenges remain. There is still a need to fine-tune the system all throughout the process of mushroom production. Admittedly, financial, land, and human resources are still limited. There is still a need to create a much wider impact in terms of correcting the misconceptions of the larger community about mushroom consumption. It is also a challenge to branch out into other mushroom types as the local community still prefers straw mushrooms rather than oyster mushrooms, which the SMTF is promoting due to many reasons,

including longer shelf-life and ease of cultivation. Straw mushroom cultivation also poses more challenges for persons with disabilities (i.e. accessibility to physical location) whereas oyster mushrooms can be grown in accessible locations and in bags in a room.

Societal challenges, said SMTF, also still need to be overcome, including the negative perspective of society about persons with disabilities as a 'burden', as well as discrimination of consumers or customers. On the individual level, persons with disabilities are constantly trying to overcome lack of confidence and need to improve their business knowledge, skills, and experiences. According to Mr. Myat Thu Winn, persons with disabilities need to look beyond mere employment as an economic goal, and instead cultivate a mindset of being entrepreneurs in their own right. On the government and policymakers' side, there is a delay on the guidelines' approval although DPOs can proceed with activities sans support from government.

INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

There are several positive things that are going well for Pathein's mushroom farming project. One of these is that it is being implemented by an organization that is well-established, has good business knowledge, and promotes disability-inclusive business. Its strong representation among DPOs and the business sector will certainly help in terms of opportunities for training and skills development, potential business partners, networking possibilities, and further promotion of the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

The support given by the local and national government through the DOR, MSWRR, and DSW, coupled with the formulation of a national policy guidelines for hometown improvement are big steps in the institutionalization of this project. Plus, technical support and other assistance from APCD and other partners further strengthen the process.

The active involvement of persons with disabilities, including family members and the community, is also a good guide to the creation of a good practices model. Combined with SMART goals, and proper business planning and marketing strategy, the project will grow slowly but steadily.





WAY FORWARD

Among the future steps SMTF and the mushroom farming participants are planning to take are:

- Launch and replication of the mushroom farming business in the rest of Pathein, as well as the townships of Yekyi, Dhanuphyu, and Hnthada using the knowledge and techniques learned from the hometown improvement project training
- Further training to 120 persons with disabilities and family members
- Provision of at least 2,000 mushroom bag loans per person with disabilities up to a total of 20 recipients
- Sale of both mushroom bags and fresh products
- More marketing trainings in the future to know more about their niche
- More financial management training, including capital, investment, and savings
- More research on potential markets for mushroom products
- Using of social media (i.e. Facebook, website) to further promote the mushroom products





Leading by Example

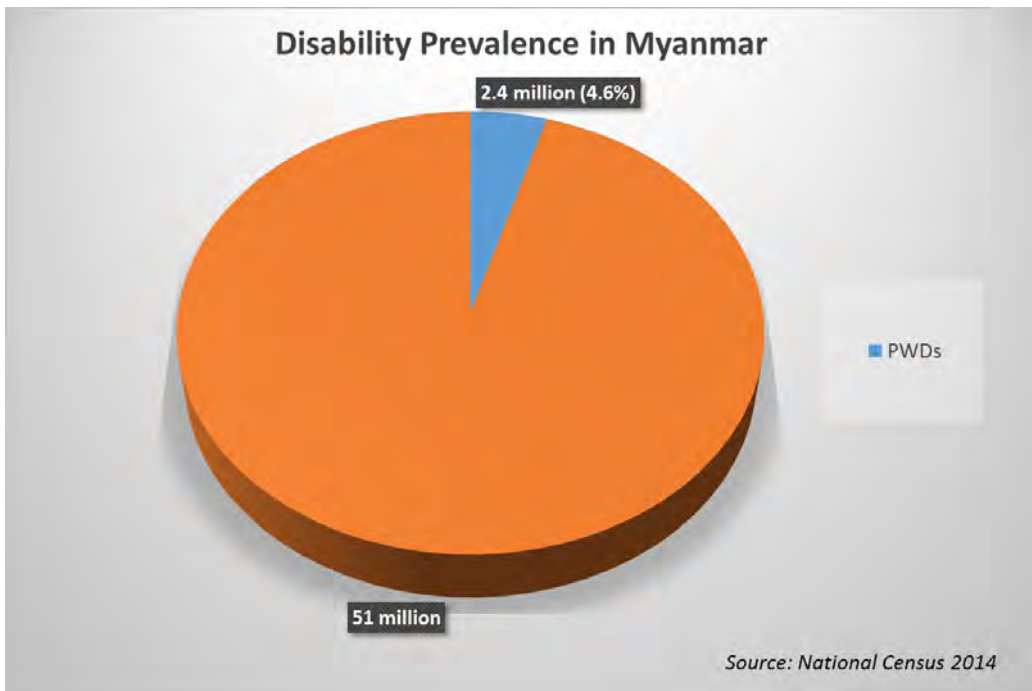
There is one value discovery we've had after the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project training was conducted. It was realizing that we can do this as a professional business. One of the good effects of the training was the confidence it brought to persons with disabilities. It changed their mindset of 'we can do this' and the realization that the mushroom business is one of the best ventures they could enter into. There was a very clear change of attitude that resulted in participants also wanting to change the community's perception about persons with disabilities and their mushroom business.

We will be doing a three-year masterplan where we will incorporate all the things we've learned from the two-year hometown improvement project and our discoveries along the way. We will also look into expanding our mushroom products, including the development of a mushroom jam.

Apart from having a good plan for the future and having the necessary legal frameworks, being able to sustain the mushroom business also means changing the attitude of persons with disabilities, their families and the community including the government. This means getting away from the charity-based mindset into the rights-based approach. Traditionally, everyone thinks that persons with disabilities shouldn't do or start any business because it will not be successful. As persons with disabilities, we want to show them that we can stand by ourselves, not just as employees but also as entrepreneurs who could lead successful businesses. We are working hard for this. It is an ongoing process but it's important that we do this. – **Mr. Myat Thu Winn, President, Shwe Minn Tha Foundation (SMTF)**



DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART











PHILIPPINES

**SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE URBAN MICRO-
GARDENING AND COMMUNITY-BASED
COOPERATIVE AT BARANGAY 177**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Sustainable Inclusive Urban Micro-Gardening and Community-Based Cooperative at Barangay 177

The ‘Sustainable Inclusive Urban Micro-Gardening and Community-Based Cooperative Model in Barangay 177, Caloocan City, Philippines was an inclusive response to the economic and livelihood needs not only of persons with disabilities but also the marginalized sectors including the elderly in the community. This disability-inclusive business project targets 1,028 persons with diverse disabilities in the village and is in accordance with the policies stipulated in the Magna Carta of Disabled Persons, or RA 7277 of the Philippine Constitution.

Following the CBID approach, the hometown project is supported by APCD, National Council on Disability Affairs, Department of Social Work and Development, and the Department of Agriculture through the Agricultural Training Institute. On the local community side, the project also enjoys the full support of local government councils with the ‘barangay captain’ (village head) actively monitoring and assisting project activities, through the village’s Persons with Disability Affairs Office. Besides persons with disability groups, the village’s senior citizen association and youth sector have also lent a helping hand in the project.

Further strengthening the project are the 4 memorandum of agreements (MOA) signed by partners and stakeholders:

- MOA between landowners of a residential area and village chief
- MOA allowing use of idle land for the village urban gardening project
- MOA allowing the use of said land for vegetable farming
- MOA stipulating free land use on the condition that the village “shall surrender the land should the owner needs it”

The project began with 20 persons with disabilities participating, who worked together to locate available idle lands where they could plant organic vegetables to be farmed by persons with disabilities themselves. There were initially two plots of land identified with 500 and 240 sq.m. each. Currently, they have 4 vacant lots (total aggregated area of around 2,320 sq.m.) being planted organic vegetables. After the workshop, participants started farming vegetables such as moringa, eggplants, tomatoes, bokchoy, and lady fingers (okra). After further consultations with the trainers and observation of the market, they decided to focus on eggplants and chili peppers. These plants are considered high value, faster growing, and continuously produce fruits.

The initial harvests after two months were only for the household consumption of persons with disabilities. As the project is very new, they are not expecting much revenue for this until they have enough produce to harvest and have explored the byproducts of the vegetables. According to project implementors, the production cycle has to be developed, observed, and regularly monitored if they want to sustain the project.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of the Philippines through Ministry of Social Work and Development (DSWD)
- Local government agencies, such as National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA)
- Department of Agriculture through the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI)
- Village councils, such as Barangay 177
- Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO)
- DPOs
- Senior citizens and youth associations

WORKSHOP: Sustainable Urban Micro Gardening and Development

The workshop on Sustainable Urban Micro Gardening and Development conducted by APCD in coordination with the DSWD, NCDA and Agricultural Training Institute drew 28 participants 11 of which were persons with disabilities and the rest a combination of youth groups and senior citizens from Barangay 177. Over 80% said they were satisfied with the training and were interested in implementing said urban gardening project.

Among the topics discussed and new knowledge they learned from the two-day workshop were proper planting of vegetable crops, producing organic fertilizers, use of recycled planting materials to cut costs, and the right plotting and spacing of planting vegetables, among others. They also learned which crops are fast-yielding ones and how to create the proper drainage for the crops to thrive.

TRAINING RESULTS: A Village That Works Together, Enjoys the Benefits Together

Several results were noted after the workshop. Among them are:

- Creation of a Project Planning Team led by NCDA via a series of meetings and consultations with partners in stakeholders
- Acquisition of new knowledge and skills on planting organic, high-yielding vegetables for the consumption of persons with disabilities and their households — a great benefit as vegetables in the city are very expensive
- A sense of ownership by persons with disabilities as evident in the active participation, initiative, and enthusiasm exhibited by participants post-workshop

- A sense of community and inclusivity as various sectors including persons with disabilities, senior citizens, youth groups, all gave a hand in the project development
- Creation of a national policy guideline that will help the sustainability of the project and its potential replication in other areas.
- A renewed sense of hope and confidence about increasing their income levels and quality of life by applying what they've learned right in their own homes.
- Stronger ties between national and local governments, DPOs and other concerned agencies and stakeholders in pursuing CBID projects.
- Increased vegetable production and harvest for local consumption.

CHALLENGES

One common challenge for project implementors in the hometown improvement project is the lack of funds, especially coming from the local government, and this is what the Barangay 177 project is facing as well. One way to resolve this is to look for funds elsewhere, such as the private sector, to further support the endeavors of persons with disabilities.

One of the direct effects of the lack of funding are limited resources and capital useful in establishing a strong disability-inclusive business venture. This, in turn, limits the production of information, education and communication (IEC) materials to promote the project and enjoin others to take part. These materials are also needed to promote social inclusion, disability rights, empowerment and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Although they have received the hometown improvement training and are regularly keeping in touch with the resource persons from the Agricultural

Training Institute, the group still has limited technical capacity especially in food production and food processing of the harvested vegetables. In the business plan they created after the workshop, they need to be able to process the chilies into products like chili powder and chili sauce with a longer shelf life, and be able to market it to the largest supermarket chain in the country.

One other challenge is the need for mapping, profiling and update of disaggregated information of persons with disabilities. This resolution of data gaps will help them create a long-term plan for activities related to hometown improvement. The continuous mapping of idle and usable lands, likewise, is necessary if they want the project to be sustainable and long-term. This is quite difficult to do because there is a scarcity of land in highly-urbanized areas like Caloocan City where Barangay 177 is situated. Another challenge is if there is a change in village leadership, the policy to continue the urban farming project may be scrapped, so it is important for government to closely monitor the project.





Reality Check

Like any other new projects, we can note both weaknesses and strengths. For instance, we need to ensure more empowerment of persons with disabilities who are involved in the project. For this urban garden project, this means we have to work the details out with the local barangay (village) council in terms of local policies and ordinances, as well as incentives and work opportunities, so persons with disabilities will really feel they're a part of the project.

If we look at business, the main goal is to earn a profit. For persons with disabilities to be involved, they also have to earn. That's the very first goal we have to look into. How are persons with disabilities benefiting from this?

Will the company benefit from persons with disabilities as contributor? Do they have a common goal in coming up with a sustainable income-generating project? We have to be realistic about it. For government or business companies to invest on a project, and for persons with disabilities to devote their time on it, all parties involved need to benefit from it. That's the reality.

For NCDA's part, we will replicate the project in other communities and are already looking at potential barangays or villages. – **Ms. Carmen Reyes Zubiaga, Officer in Charge, National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA)**



INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

One of the strengths of Barangay 177 is the active participation, enthusiasm, and initiative of project implementors and participants. One good example for this is that even as the workshop was still being conducted, the village head and PDAO office have already identified and cleaned out the plot of land to be used for the post-workshop planting. Thus, a committed and strong partnership between DPO groups, community members and local government is a good practice that others can emulate.

The openness and strong support from the national government and other agencies, likewise, further strengthen the project. In this case, the NCDA, DSWD, and ATI have joined together assisting in technical trainings and mapping out strategies for business for persons with disabilities implementing the project. Regular monitoring and consultations are musts to develop the skills and sustain the interest and commitment of the group.

The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons in the country's Constitution, and followed by the drafting of national policy guidelines give the hometown improvement project the legal framework to operate and be replicated in other parts of the country.

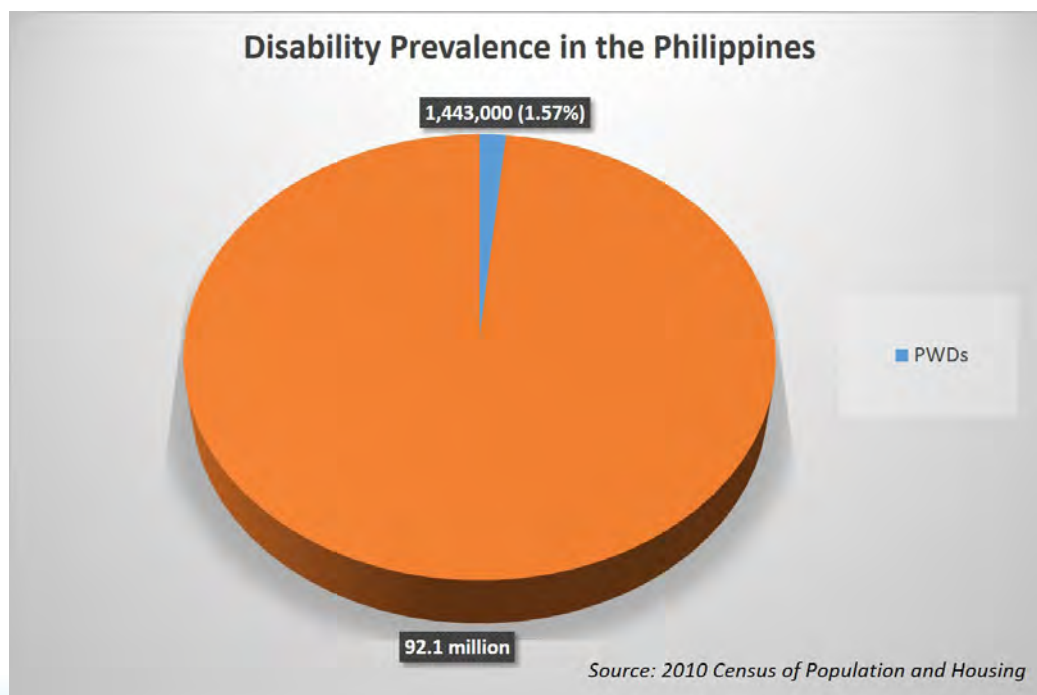
WAY FORWARD

Barangay 177 project implementors are looking at several steps and/or opportunities to further improve the urban gardening project. Some of the propositions that were presented include:

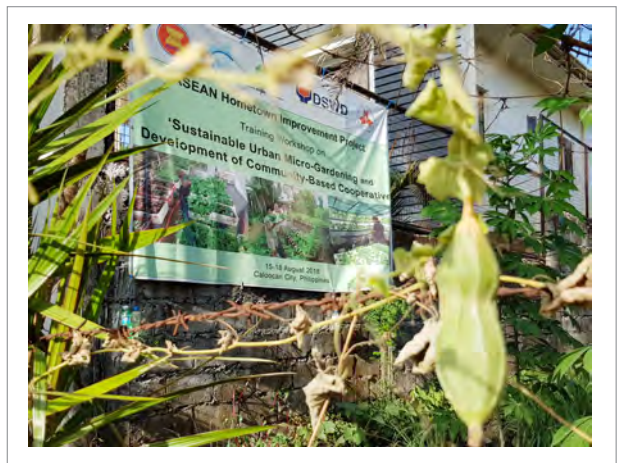
- Plans for the establishment of social enterprise and cooperative groups
- Strengthen ties and network with the business sector as stipulated in the business plan for the project

- Fully implement the policies and laws for persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups
- Look for funding support from government agencies, which could provide program assistance and the capacity building needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups
- Keep track of technical experts from national government agencies who could assist in the development of the project in the future.
- Strengthen partnerships with other hometown improvement project participants in the ASEAN region and keep learning from the lessons of their counterparts

DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART









THAILAND

**EARTHWORM CASTING AND CACTUS FARMING
AT FARM D (FARM OF DISABILITY)**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Earthworm Casting and Cactus Farming at Farm D

The Foundation of Independent Living (FIL), which runs the Nakhon Pathom Center for Independent Living based in Thailand's Nakhon Pathom province, is a model self-help group of persons with disabilities that seeks to promote the concept of independence living, free from economic restraints among persons with disabilities. In 2002, FIL was selected by DEP among three potential groups in provinces nearby Bangkok. It eventually set up an independent living center in cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The goal is not just to provide counseling or inspire persons with disabilities but to actually empower them and bring them from their homes out into the society as productive members of their respective communities. At the same time, they also need to make a living. As a result, the Center's earthworm casting or vermicompost business was born, after which they branched out into cactus farming.

Currently, NCIL has 7 sub-groups of DPOs, all of which underwent the vermicompost training, and are now producing and distributing organic fertilizers in Nakhon Pathom and nearby provinces. Part of the group's fertilizer products are sent to NCIL headquarters to be distributed to bigger malls. As it is a cooperative, whatever earnings they get is divided among members of the groups.

The training they had with APCD was very helpful as it gave them ideas on proper marketing, branding and packaging. It helped increased sales and improve their fertilizer products. Sold under the name of Farm D, the vermicompost from earthworm casting is also certified as a "standardized organic fertilizer" by the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand. They also use the fertilizer for their cactus farms, a reflection of the Foundation's sustainable business development.



With their vermicompost selling well, they thought of improving their cactus products and for the last three years or so, they have been trying to find ways to increase sales for their cactus plants. As it is a niche product, the market is a bit limited. When the NCIL was chosen for the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, they saw it as a chance to improve aspects of their cactus business, such as packaging design, branding, and marketing.

FIL was selected as the representative of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project by APCD in consultation and collaboration with other partners and stakeholders who are keen on promoting the CBID approach to business and entrepreneurship, such as Department of the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP), Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office (PSDHS), Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), and Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO) in Nakhon Pathom.

Thailand has very good legislation strongly in place for persons with disabilities, with the DEP acting as the national focal point on the development of the quality of life of Thai persons with disabilities. The DEP also serves as the coordinating body and Secretariat of the National Committee for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Among the benefits that persons with disabilities get from the government include disability allowance, free personal assistance service, legal aid services, vocational training, welfare protection institutions, and so much more. There is more room for improvement, however, including stronger ties and collaboration with self-help groups like independent living centers. There is also a need to bring more awareness to the capabilities of persons with disabilities to be strongly independent if they are provided with the right inclusive environment on various levels.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of Thailand through Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) and Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP)
- Local government offices and agencies, such as Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office (PSDHS), Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), and Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO)
- Foundation for Independent Living
- Other DPOs
- Experts and resource persons from Thailand

WORKSHOP: Packaging Design and Value Added for Cactus Farming

A total of 48 participants, 21 of which were persons with disabilities who are members of FIL, attended the “Packaging Design and Value Added for Cactus Farming” workshop, which is aimed to introducing participants to new, creative approaches in the presentation of the cactus products, among other skills. More than 85% of participants gave positive reviews about the workshop.

Besides presenting packaging design aesthetics, and marketing and product branding theories and idea, participants were also given hands-on training in the creation of new packaging designs that allowed them to be creative and to brainstorm. They also discussed marketing plans and public relations campaigns to increase product awareness among potential consumers of both the cactus products and fertilizers.

All the activities and business plans discussed at the workshop is still going through the planning and implementation process as of this writing.

TRAINING RESULTS: Independent Living Produces Great Results

Whereas before the product packaging for the cactus plants were just wrapping plastic, the training enabled the participants to come up with more creative packaging products such as boxes of different sizes and shapes, all attractively presented and are competitive. As a result, orders have picked up a bit and they can now proudly present their products to potential wholesale or retail buyers.

They have also actively participated in local and international expos such as the Thai Expo 2018, where they had a booth presenting both their colorful cactus products and the organic fertilizer. The product design is an ongoing development and FIL continues to make improvements to the product packaging. Subsequent exposure to the public, including government agencies and private businesses have opened up awareness about the cactus products.

They also got a loan from SME Development Bank for 1,800,000 Thai baht, along with a PR package that would help in promoting the business. FIL is not just getting a loan but technical support and advice as well on how to improve and sustain the cactus business. The group is also currently making the rounds of potential wholesale customers to offer their fertilizer and cactus products.

Overall, despite remaining challenges, FIL members are happy and appreciative of the results of the training. According to FIL officials, they used to sell about 2,000 kilos of fertilizer to the shops and 1,000 kilo online per year; now that has jumped to 9,000 kilos of fertilizer sold per year. They would want the cactus farm to pick up sales as soon as possible.

CHALLENGES

Current challenges hounding persons with disabilities continue to be the limitations imposed on persons with disabilities-led business enterprises. These include the lack of marketing strategies, loan limitations, lack or improper business advice, lack of investment opportunities, and other implementation problems.

Another issue is the seeming misconception about independent living centers and its aims. As per the experience of FIL, they noted the old mindset still prevalent among government agencies in looking at persons with disabilities as a sector that needs to be helped and solely supported by monetary 'donation'. Persons with disabilities don't feel they are recognized for their capacities to contribute to society. They would like to see clear communication happening between the two sectors to avoid misunderstanding. One example of this is some government sectors still don't understand the concept of independent living and tend to interpret these centers as wanting to 'isolate' themselves from the main DPO in the community. Those who operate independently, meanwhile, look at themselves as not needing to be part of a government-led DPO so they could independently make decisions on their own. Clearly, both groups are looking at and defining these concepts from two different perspectives.

On the other hand, as is the case, these self-help groups do not have direct access to various trainings being offered by the local government offices. They also more often than not don't want to go through the complicated process of presenting a proposal for a loan, for instance. It's a delicate balance between communication and action that both groups need to settle and resolve.



INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

It is important for a self-help group to be able to strongly progress forward, albeit slowly, and this is possible with strong foresight and leadership, which FIL seems to have. FIL members' sense of independence is very strong. It is a good thing that Thailand has strong legislations for persons with disabilities firmly in place and properly implemented. Awareness about the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities is also getting higher, which helps FIL members in presenting their products to various sectors, including government and private businesses.

The national guidelines created for hometown improvement in Thailand also further clarifies the government's commitment to advancing the empowerment of persons with disabilities, especially in disability-inclusive business.

WAY FORWARD

Among the more important steps FIL can do to progress in their two businesses include the following:

- Continue to improve and expand their product lines
- Attend and conduct more capacity building and skills development trainings for the staff on a regular basis
- Continue and open up more dialogue with local and national government sectors so both sectors can arrive at a mutual understanding of each other's requirements and needs
- Collaboration with partners, like APCD and other groups, in future projects partnerships and activities



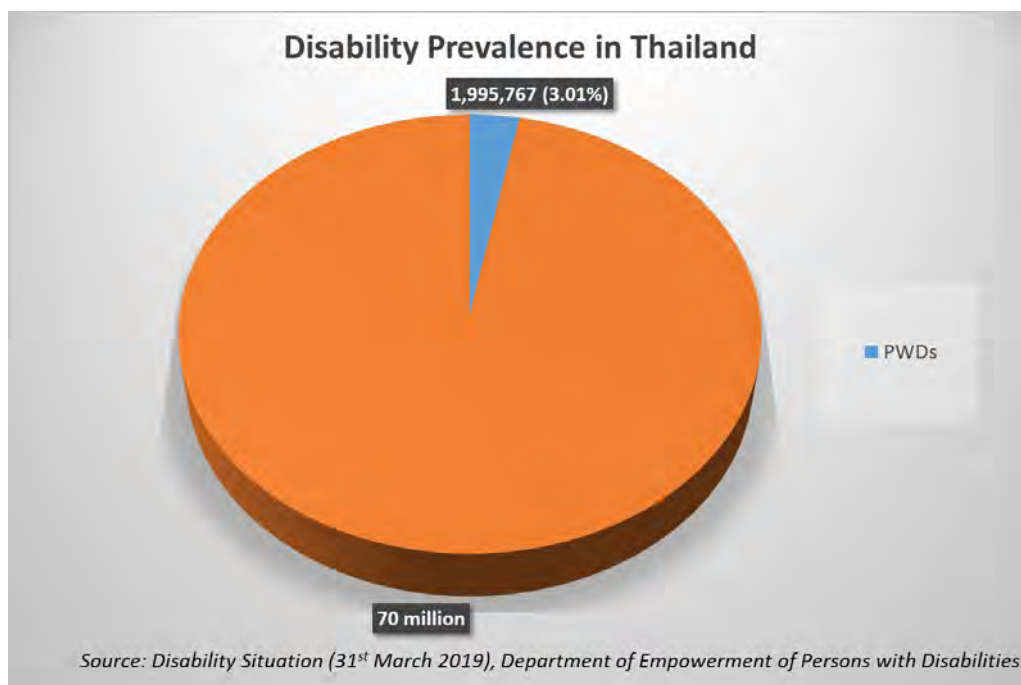
Looking Beyond Profit

We are one of the working groups of the main fertilizer product and this is where we started the cactus farm, too, because this is my passion. Our group is very much focused on empowerment of persons with disabilities. While we acknowledge that profit is important, money is not our main priority. At the moment, while sales and income have increased, we still don't have the actual number of total profits we've made.

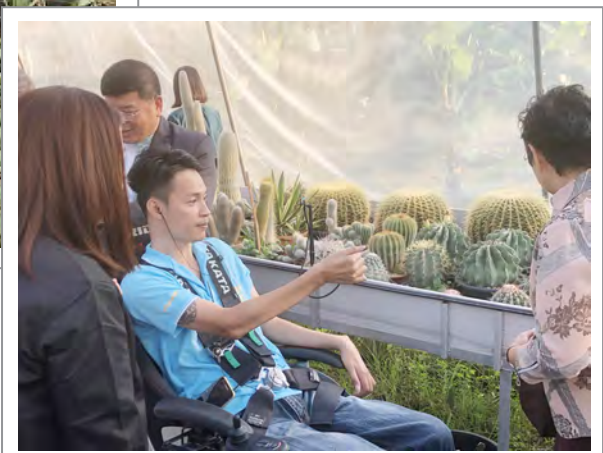


The goal of setting up groups like ours is not about finding the profit but more on helping other persons with disabilities in the area. There was a time when there were some misunderstandings about priorities and goals. Initially, one of the challenges we faced was determining where the direction of the group was going. Most people in the group were focused on the income and profit, which made everyone unhappy. The important thing we need to learn as a self-help group is that we shouldn't be looked at by the public, as well as government sector, as looking for charity. We'd like to be recognized for our abilities to contribute something to society as independent persons. Now, our members are more focused on creating quality products. Profit is very important, I won't deny that, but it is not necessary. – **Mr. Adisak Papornchai, Cactus Farm Learning Center, Srisathong Sub-District, Nakhon Pathom)**

DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART









VIETNAM

**FERMENTED DRY BAMBOO WASTE
FERTILIZER AT BAMBOO DANA CO. LTD.**

HOMETOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: Fermented Dry Bamboo Waste Fertilizer at Bamboo Dana Co. Ltd.

Bamboo Dana Co. Ltd., a disability-inclusive bamboo company known for its bamboo products like toothpicks and chopsticks, for instance, is located in Haichao Village, in Da Nang, Vietnam. Before becoming part of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project, the factory would burn about 2 tons of bamboo waste daily. Its president, Mr. Tran Viet Linh, wanting to explore more environmental ways of using the bamboo waste, began researching on a 15-year-old fermented bamboo fertilizer technology that is being used in Japan. This is what he wanted to develop as an ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project. He even conducted experiments on bamboo fermentation based on his Japanese counterparts' inputs during the training in 2017.

Bamboo Dana Co. Ltd. hires workers directly from the community. Currently, he has 16 staff working in the office, and 4 staff working at the factory, 2 of which have physical disability, 1 person who is deaf, and 1 with psychosocial disability.

The project's progress, however, got delayed due to the long experimentation process in the bamboo fermentation, as well as unexpected misalignment of objectives and policy procedures among project partners. Needless to say, all partners and stakeholders had to go back to the drawing board to discuss anew the direction the project would take, in terms of policy agreements and government protocols. It took several months to straighten out the guidelines to be followed in the implementation of the project. In 2018, the project began to move forward again.

KEY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

- Government of Vietnam through Ministry of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Department of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) – Danang and Department of Agriculture
- Local government agencies, such as Danang People’s Committee
- Disability-inclusive businesses, i.e. Bamboo Danang Co. Ltd.
- Local DPOs
- Local farmers associations

WORKSHOP: “How to Make Best Use of Bamboo”

The workshop was the very first ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project training to be conducted in August 2017. It was attended by 41 participants consisting of 8 Bamboo Dana staff, 16 farmers, 8 DPO representatives (including Da Nang Association of the Blind), and 9 government officers. Despite the high attendance, it was noted much later that only one person with disability and two local farmers continuously tried and experimented with the bamboo fertilizer in their respective farms.

Those who carried out said experiments used the dry bamboo fermentation technique sourced from the bamboo waste from the Bamboo Dana factory. According to the result of the mid-term evaluation, the farmers who experimented on this particular technique were satisfied with the results in their farms. The full result is still on hold, however, pending approval and authorization from the government’s own scientific research to ensure that the product is safe for use in the community. Without official government approval, Bamboo Dana cannot do any large-scale production the fertilizer and can only use it in small farms.



Impressions on Bamboo Fertilizer Experiments

“I’ve tested the bamboo fertilizer in my own farm and I have noticed that it keeps insects and pests away from the farm.” — ***Mr. Loui, Farmer, Da Nang***

“The bamboo fertilizer created by Bamboo Dana looked very promising. Two vegetable farms, with 50 workers, used the product and they claimed they have received good results.” — ***Mr. Koji Koga, Fermented Bamboo Fertilizer Expert, Japan***



CHALLENGES

According to Mr. Linh, the project has encountered several challenges, among which include the long application approval from the Da Nang People's Committee for a grant application he made. He is requesting 7 billion VND (300,000 USD) for the factory building, electrical system enhancements of the factory, and bamboo fertilizer testing.

He said he is looking at a two-step process: 1) Experimenting and research work in the first three years; and 2) Expansion of the business that will create more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. This means he would be needing funding to extend the range of his manufacturing products and for him to be able to buy machine, which will in turn produce more products. If his application doesn't get approved or subsidized by the government, then he will try to get a loan from the bank.

Other challenges are concerns about the bamboo fertilizer's viability and salability in the market, which is reflective of the market's trust on Bamboo Dana's products.

INSIGHTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Despite certain delays in the implementation process, the following have been noted:

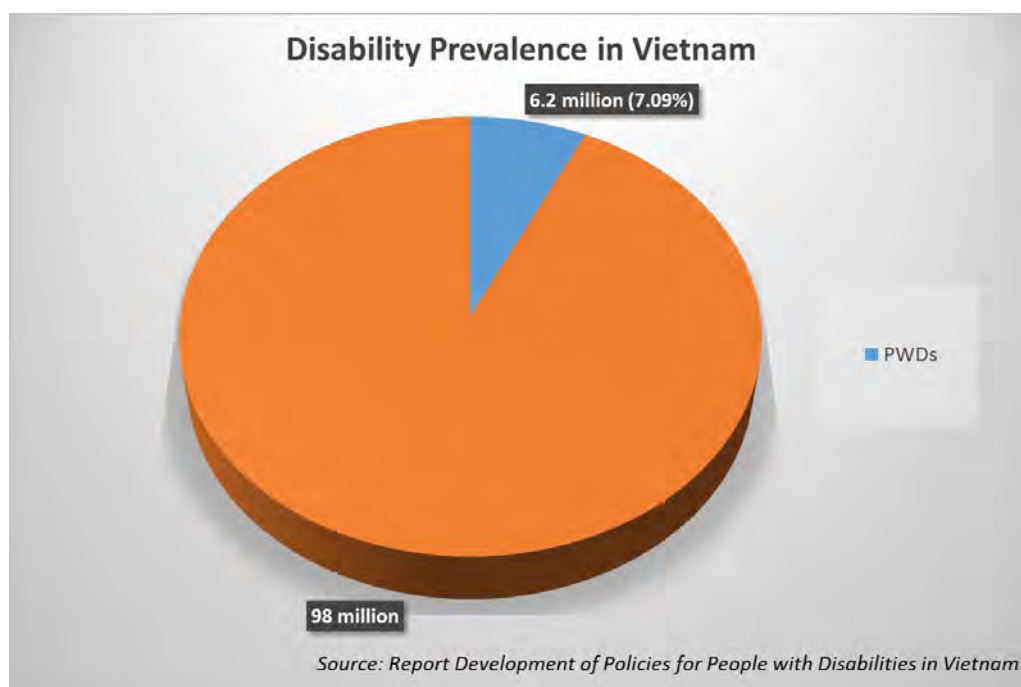
- Determination and commitment of Bamboo Dana in the promotion of the bamboo fertilizer helps in the promotion of livelihood opportunities of persons with disabilities.
- The environment-friendly aspect of the bamboo fertilizer production can be a good addition to a disability-inclusive business model.
- The creation of a national policy guidelines for hometown improvement will help facilitate the approval and implementation of projects in the future.

WAY FORWARD

- To give the marketing plan free to farmers to inform them more about the benefits of using bamboo fertilizer and get feedback from them
- To further do research and experimentation to improve the quality of the bamboo fertilizer
- To sell them with 50% discount promo for one year after which it will be sold at a normal price
- To look for ways to get subsidized or get funding for the purchase of more machines, which would yield more products at a faster rate



DISABILITY PREVALENCE CHART







CONCLUSION

The Project for ASEAN Hometown Improvement through Disability-Inclusive Community Model conducted in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam received very positive feedback overall during the course of the two-year project period.

While the project encountered delays and changes due to unexpected circumstances, the interest and commitment of participating ‘hometowns’ kept the project moving forward however the challenges. Regular meetings and consultations with partners and stakeholders about the progress of the project have been done by the project staff. Project Field Officers assigned to coordinate with local partners and monitoring projects reports were asked to submit regular updates as well.

The project’s main activities were undertaken -- Baseline Survey, Capacity Building Training Workshop, Technical Review/Midterm Evaluation, National Guidelines/Policy Workshop, ASEAN Hometown Regional Forum, and Final Evaluation. Of the activities mentioned, three were pivotal points for the whole project -- Capacity Building Workshop, National Guidelines/Policy Workshop, and the ASEAN Hometown Regional Forum.

The Capacity Building Training Workshops, held in collaboration with national governments of each participating country, were arranged on topics derived from suggestions from the government and other local partners, as well as from the results of the baseline survey. The workshops were designed to train participating DPOs on specific skills and knowledge that they need to be able to successfully implement their disability-inclusive hometown projects and closely network with the community. At the same time, it gives them the means to earn income and improve their quality of life.

Another key activity for the project is the creation of National Policy Guidelines, which could be based on existing legal frameworks in each country. The Workshop



on Policy and Development on Hometown Improvement was conducted in the participating countries and attended by national and local government officials and representatives, as well as members of the disability community including DPOs. The first draft of guidelines on hometown improvement was done through a compilation and analysis of existing policies in each country. The final version of the guidelines was presented at the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Forum in March 7 to 8 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Included in the guidelines are profiles of persons with disabilities in each country, their educational level and employment status, health and livelihood, and challenges, among others. Also highlighted in the document are disability-inclusive governance, government policies, policy development in line with regional and international instruments, accessibility, and private sector partnership, and more. disability-inclusive business policies were also included, as well as guidelines on the implementation of ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project and Partnership among ASEAN countries. The latter encourages a multi-pronged approach to various ASEAN sectoral bodies (i.e. health, education, labor, social welfare and development, etc.) and potential partnerships that advocate for a Community-Based Inclusive Development approach. These Guidelines are published in local languages and compiled in one English-language booklet.

The ASEAN Hometown Improvement Forum, meanwhile, was a platform for all participating hometowns to share their knowledge, experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in running their respective disability-inclusive businesses. The Forum's objectives were as follows:

- 1) To showcase and discuss relevant policies, services, and programs for persons with disabilities
- 2) To obtain policy recommendations on Hometown Improvement at the ASEAN level
- 3) To build and strengthen collaboration between DPOs and government agencies in the creation of an inclusive hometown

The Forum was also a venue for participating ‘hometowns’ to showcase their products and services with mini-exhibits and sales booths. Furthermore, the Forum was an effective platform for participants in expanding their network and strengthening existing partnerships.

Across all target countries, implementation and management of the Hometown Improvement projects revealed so many similarities. All of them, except for Vietnam, needed a boost in product innovation and packaging design, resulting in higher consumer demand and increased income. All countries also needed good marketing strategies and sound business plans, which they need to constantly review and improve if they want to be competitive in the market.

Similarly, all hometown projects were in need of funding from various sources, including government and private sectors, in order to sustain their projects. Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand seem to enjoy varying degrees of government support in either funding and/or technical training, and legal documents.

Interestingly, Indonesia, Malaysia, and to a certain extent Thailand, have made significant improvements in their product designs and sales. These three countries reported that their products are enjoying brisk sales due to the improvements made after the capacity-building workshop. Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam are strongly led by entrepreneurs and leaders with disabilities. This translates to higher awareness about the concept and practice of accessibility and inclusivity in their respective businesses. On the other hand, the officers leading the activities in Indonesia and Malaysia are very driven, which resulted in them being able to encourage and inspire their members with disabilities into having a work performance up to par with current expectations.

One of the most important lessons learned in the implementation of this project is the value of strengthening and keeping close ties with the three partnership pillars: Government, Private Sector, and DPOs. Constant and regular communication, clear expectations and goals, sharing of experiences, participation in trainings and



workshops are just some of the activities where these three sectors can develop for a successful project based on mutual respect and trust. These partners and stakeholders need to constantly keep the dialogue open to facilitate the smooth flow of the project implementation.

Also worth mentioning is the increase in community awareness and support for the project as a result of the active involvement of all sectors concerned, all of which can be replicated in other communities. This can also be further used as a country model.

The stakeholders also need to be a step ahead and open to innovations if they were to keep up with competitors in the market and continue the income stream.

Close collaboration, networking, innovation, and commitment to the sustainability of the hometown improvement project are crucial takeaways people can get from this project. Certainly, the way forward is not easy but with these essential principles, the probabilities of the project succeeding and making an impact are quite high.

The final evaluation of the project showed some impressive results considering implementation had a very limited duration. For one, all DPOs and CBID centers participating in the project have been successful in product and overall business improvement. This was due to the increase in and application of newly-acquired knowledge in branding, packaging, and marketing courtesy of the trainings and workshops.

As for impact, the reduction in poverty among persons with disabilities and elderly in rural communities is hard to determine at present because this requires observation and research of a longer duration and will not be determined within the short-term project implementation. There are, however, early signs of impact in selected DPOs and disability-inclusive business centers, which show increased production and sale, business expansion, new staff with disability employment, to name a few.



But considered to be the biggest achievement of the project is the development of Guidelines on Hometown Improvement for Persons with Disabilities and its acknowledgement by all relevant government ministries and departments in six target countries, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Myanmar and Lao PDR are currently reviewing and refining the guidelines. Said guidelines have been recognized as a supplement to the existing government laws and policies.

The mid-term and final evaluations of the ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project revealed the following trends:

- 1) The guidelines will be effective in helping persons with disabilities and their family members in either starting or expanding their business.
- 2) Through the guidelines, governments or any other private or non-profit organizations will be given the proper legal instrument to replicate the ASEAN Hometown Improvement model, as well as to improvise and contextualize it as per their needs.
- 3) The guidelines are good pillars for the future expansion of the Hometown Improvement model in ASEAN countries. However, the ASEAN guidelines have not been finalized within the duration of this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Valuable recommendations have come up from the research and interviews conducted during the final evaluation of this project. Among these are:

- 1) The ASEAN Hometown Improvement Project has “just touched a base” for establishing this hometown disability-inclusive model in target ASEAN countries. APCD needs to continue this initiative through proper collaboration with all relevant ministries and departments.
- 2) Ensure a more coherent and holistic guiding documents for ASEAN Hometown Improvement by APCD
- 3) APCD needs to continue advocating for the recognition of the guidelines by key stakeholders including ASEAN Secretariat, government ministries, civil society organizations, DPOs, and international development agencies.
- 4) This regional platform needs to be maintained and strengthened for the expansion of the hometown improvement concept in the ASEAN region.
- 5) The establishment of a proper monitoring mechanism for the project from beginning to end in order to achieve expected results
- 6) Analysis of the products’ market feasibility before actual production and diversification of the products in the business are needed.
- 7) In case of agricultural products, a climate resilience mechanism should be included in the business model.
- 8) Participation of persons with disabilities and other community members should be ensured from the project for the ultimate benefit of the whole community.

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