



HOMENET SEA JOINS 5th International Meeting on Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) 15-18 October, Quezon City



Some 40 members of the Homenet country homenets in Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, and Pakistan participated in the 5th International Solidarity Meeting of Solidarity Economy (SSE) in the Philippines October 15 to 18. This was the first time that this international meeting was hosted in Asia by the International Network on the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy / Reseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'Economie Sociale Solidaire (RIPESS) and this was in coordination with the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD), Diliman, Quezon City.



The Opening Session was held at the UP Film Institute and was participated in by more than 653 delegates from 32 countries across six continents. No less than the University of the Philippines President Alfredo E. Pascual welcomed the delegates.

The morning featured an Overview of SSE with a keynote speech from Michael Lewis (right photo), Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal. Other speakers included Paul Singer, the Secretary of Solidarity Economy of Brazil (left photo). The



other speakers included Peter Utting, Deputy Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and Ms. Nancy Neamtan, President of Chantier de l'Economie Sociale Solidaire. An open forum then followed. Dr. Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, UPCSWCD Dean and Co-Chair of the National Organizing Committee, was the co-emcee with Dr. Denison Jayasooria (right below). Speakers representing North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania spoke on the State of the Art of SSEs in their continents in the afternoon.

Field visits to SSE Projects and 12 SOAs (Oct 16)

On Day 2 (Oct. 16) of the 5th International Meeting of Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), the foreign participants (160 delegates

from around 30 countries from all six continents) were treated to lunch by Quezon City (QC) Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte. They visited the urban organic farm in the QC Circle and two other sites in the city where initiatives on SSE and good practices were evident.

Also on Oct. 16, twelve **Self-Organized Activities (SOAs)** held in various venues in UP—CSWCD, SOLAIR, ISSI, Asian Center, Abelardo Hall and Bahay ng Alumni. A Solidarity Market featuring products from different countries was simultaneously held at the grounds of UP CSWCD. Homenet SEA had its own SOA on **“Sustainable Livelihoods for Homebased Workers: Towards a Social Solidarity Economy”** facilitated by former ILO and UNIFEM Regional Program Adviser Lucy Lazo.



ASEAN Leadership Forum and ASEC

On Oct. 17, the Opening Session of the ASEAN Leadership Forum gathered more than 200 delegates from the 10 ASEAN member countries at the UP Asian Cen-



ter to hear about Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) as the New Global Partnership. Peter Utting of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and

DSWD Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman were the guest speakers (bottom right), together with former NEDA Secretary Ciel Habito.

The afternoon of Oct. 17 featured country, continental and thematic workshops. The Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), held an organizational meeting after the presentation of the results of eight SOAs. ASEC co-organized the forum, and funded resource persons, including Homenet speakers from Cambodia, Thailand, and Pakistan.

Highlights of the last day included a synthesis of all the workshops, policy direction setting, and closing rites.



RIPESS Calls on UN to Promote Social and Solidarity Economy
by Peter Utting, UNRISD

Welcoming the recent initiative of 14 United Nations agencies to establish an [Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy](#), participants at the [5th RIPESS International Meeting on Social Solidarity Economy](#) called on the new body to carry on the work begun this year by UNRISD and the ILO of organizing an annual conference on SSE. They further recommended that the Task Force be open to civil society participation. Delegates urged UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the high-level processes associated with the post-2015 agenda to heed the recommendations that emerged in the recent [civil society consultation](#), organized by UN-NGLS, to allow SSE voices to be heard in the process of designing the future Sustainable Development Goals.

Held back-to-back with the ASEAN Leadership Forum, organized by the Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute, the RIPESS meeting (15-18 October 2013 in Manila) brought together 653 participants from 31 countries. It was an opportunity for SSE practitioners and intermediary organizations to assess progress and engage policy makers from several Southeast Asian countries. While quite different interpretations of SSE emerged, there was a broad consensus on the importance of inclusive growth, solidarity, cooperation and community development as an alternative to neoliberal approaches and economic models centred on self-interest, profit maximization and consumerism. High-level political authorities in the Philippines, including Secretary for Social Welfare and Development Corazon Soliman, Senate Majority Floor Leader Alan Peter Cayetano (right photo), and Mayor of Quezon City Herbert Bautista, lent their support to the RIPESS and ASEAN Leadership Forum meetings, acknowledging the need for development alternatives and the crucial role of SSE in crafting a more just and equitable society.



Assessing progress on SSE

The RIPESS meeting, the fifth of its kind held since 1997, took stock of the notable progress that has occurred in recent



years in building SSE practices and networks in the six regions where [RIPESS](#) (Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy) is organized. While systematic data on SSE are still in short supply, some progress has been made in mapping SSE and understanding what role governments can play in enabling SSE. The meeting paid particular attention to critical issues such as public policy and law, as well as responsible governance of SSE and how to strengthen not only individual SSE organizations and enterprises, but also a territorial approach to SSE. Reflecting the strong participation of students in the conference, not least a lively delegation from Indonesia, significant attention focused on how SSE can engage, benefit and empower youth. The importance of seeing SSE from a gender perspective and raising the visibility gender issues in SSE practice, learning, advocacy and policy was fully endorsed by the conference.

Resist, build and strategize

In his keynote address, Mike Lewis, co-author of *The Resilience Imperative*, suggested that the power of SSE lay in what has long been its dual approach: “resist and build”. To this he added a third imperative: the need to strategize. “Remember we cannot do everything. Focused intention and strategy is critical to expanding the space occupied by the values and actors of the solidarity economy.” As priorities for action to leverage systemic change, he suggested focusing on three basic human needs—food, housing and energy—as well as three fundamental transitions:

- from speculative finance to a financial system that serves people-centred production and exchange;
- from privatization to community control of the commons; and
- from the corporate imperative to maximize profits to maximizing mutual benefit through cooperation.

Speaking via video link, Pierre Calame, Chair of the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation, cautioned against romanticizing SSE and pointed to the need to forge alliances with multiple social actors and movements, a point also emphasized by Nancy Neamtan, President of the Chantier de l’Economie Sociale. She noted significant advances in both thinking and advocacy in recent decades—from a time when social movements often bypassed economic issues, to the recognition that “economic development is our problem”. Advances also include going beyond simplistic dichotomies of state versus private ownership and control, and accepting the notion, popularized by Elinor Ostrom, that the best way to manage natural or common pool resources is often through democratic, citizen-controlled institutions. She also noted important progress in enabling SSE through public policy and law, not least in Quebec where a framework law has just been approved. (Cont’d page __)

Pointing to the rise of a global SSE movement, Paul Singer, Brazil’s National Secretary of Solidarity Economy, said that values and practices that have existed for centuries, particularly among indigenous populations, are now finding spaces for expression in contemporary contexts of crisis, alienation and social movements activism. “These are exciting times”, he said, “for rethinking the meaning of development and for bringing back into the equation values such as solidarity and happiness that have been neglected in modern times”.

Diverse perspectives on SSE

The RIPESS conference was also an occasion to think outside the box. Presenting his vision of SSE development in the Philippines, Ben Quinones, Executive Coordinator of RIPESS and Chair of the Asian Solidarity Economy Council, called for the creation and consolidation of “SSE ecosystem zones”. He presented a proposal for a parliamentary bill whereby seven million hectares of idle public land would be allocated to 750 such zones. “If transnational corporations and foreign investors can enjoy the benefits of export processing zones that simplify their regulatory environment and provide various incentives”, he argued, “why shouldn’t SSE enjoy similar advantages of privileged zones for compatible activities?” The proposed parliamentary bill draws on the definition of SSE used by UNRISD, which is included in the keynote address I delivered to the ASEAN Leadership Forum: organizations and enterprises with (i) explicit social and



Homenet SEA had its own Self-Organized activity on “*Sustainable Livelihoods for Hombased Workers: Towards a Social Solidarity Economy*” with more than 50 participants from five country homenet (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan). SSE experiences of these five countries plus Laos and Vietnam were presented.

The SOA started with Dr. Ofreneo’s review of the concept of solidarity economy in the context of neoliberal globalization and convergence of crises (e.g. food, environment aggravated by climate change) which contribute to the difficult situation for homebased workers (HBWs). In contrast to free trade, she discussed the concept of fair trade and the principles of solidarity economy. She emphasized the need to resist policies that have negative impact on HBWs and informal workers ; and build alternatives wherein the value chain leads to sustainable livelihood for everyone in the chain. In conclusion, she mentioned that (1) workers have to create jobs through self-employment, social enterprises and cooperatives because there are less and less job available in formal employment, (2) there is a need to assist the most vulnerable groups, (3) micro-finance cannot stand alone and (4) that initiatives should be gender-responsive. She also emphasized the primacy of organizing work and networking on different levels in order to build solidarity and strength among HBWs and IS organizations.

Tynaborin Chhoeun talked about the initiatives of the AAC

environmental objectives, (ii) cooperative and associative relations among members and the community, (iii) democratic self-management, and (iv) values of solidarity and *buen vivir*.

Significant differences in perspectives on SSE were evident throughout the four-day event, not least the focus in Southeast Asia on inclusive growth via micro and small enterprise development, and Latin American perspectives that emphasize the importance of collective action, democratic self-management and the need for deeper systemic change. Views also diverged on the centrality and performance of cooperatives. I suggested that just as there are varieties of capitalism, so too are there varieties of SSE, each with its own strengths, weaknesses and challenges. Learning about SSE needs to move beyond a focus on best practices. Better understanding of the multiple tensions that can arise as SSE expands is crucial for SSE to realize its significant potential as a more inclusive and sustainable pathway to development. As governments become more interested in SSE, critical analysis of SSE-state relations is also essential to ensure that the SSE agenda is not seen narrowly as an instrument for poverty reduction and social protection. The potential of SSE also relates to the imperative of distributive and environmental justice. Indeed, a re-reading of the acronym RIPESS might indicate six core elements of such a transformative agenda: **Resilience, Integrative development, Political Empowerment, Economic empowerment, Surplus redistribution and Solidarity.**

Highlights of HNSEA Self-Organized Activity (SOA)

(Artisans Association of Cambodia) to improve market access locally and internationally. Applying the trade fair concept, AAC inculcates the value of producing not only for profit but also recognition of the significant roles of their member-producers in the society. (see page 8 for full article)

Homenet Thailand believes that SE and SSE are the same. On OSH, it advocates for the use of natural dye instead of the chemical dye in order to protect the health and safety of the producers. (See page 6 for full article)

Laila Ume of Homenet Pakistan (left photo) talked about how women HBWs involved in kite making were severely affected when the ban on kite making and kite flying was imposed by government. (see page 4 for full article). Cecilia Susiloretno of Homenet Indonesia talked about the experience of SETARA, a women’s cooperative in Central of Java, in terms of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). She mentioned of policies that accommodate women’s condition, including provision of financial credit scheme that is easily accessible and provision of bridging finance credit scheme (health and education). (see page)

Josephine Parilla of HNSEA in lieu of Khantone Phamuang of Homenet Laos/ECCDA, presented the Village Bank Model in Laos. (see page)

Myrna Magbitang, Programme Manager of HNSEA, talked about **Craft Link’s “Sustainable Handicraft Development Project Processes”** and its initiatives in helping ethnic communities, disadvantaged groups and traditional crafts producers to (Continued on page 14)



Home Based Kite Producers in Lahore and Jhang

by Ume Laila Azhar, *HomeNet Pakistan*

The groups of homebased women workers in the kite making sector are highly vulnerable. Kite making has always been a business restricted to the informal sector. It was work that kept both women and men earning, and work was shared by entire families who could earn up to Rs 2,000 a day. Today most have no work to do. Although some of those affected have been able to shift their line of work, they are not as prosperous as they used to be.

Active players in the kite making industry include the original investor, the middlemen, manager of production from low income households, women kite makers and general sellers. The profit earned in the kite making is usually remains with the male head of the family. The role of the women kite maker is of an “unpaid family helper”.

Since the intervention with the kite making homeworkers, new skills have been imparted that enabled these women to start their own small business. Family dynamics are different. The profit earner is the women herself and her husband or male members of the households share the profits. In a few cases, the profit /earning is controlled by the males.

The women groups in the kite making sector belong to the poor strata of Punjab province. Kite-making, despite being an informal sector activity, has been a strong contributor to the economy of Pakistan. This industry is flourishing in different parts of the world such as China and Dubai, where annual turnover can reach billions of rupees in just two days during the Basant festival that celebrates the advent of spring season.

Because kite making is an informal home based industry, there is limited credible data available. Based on the interviews conducted, approximately 90% percent of the kite makers were women, with a majority earning between Rs. 900 to 1500 per month. Children, both male and female, also have been part of this unrecognized and unheard labor. In Pakistan, Basant used to be celebrated by millions, bringing in billions of rupees in revenue. The kite making sector itself provided work to 150,000 workers in Lahore and about 180,000 in Gujranwala and Kasur districts. Jhang District too, had a large female workforce working in kite making. The kite makers did not have any other skill for an alternative livelihood when the Punjab government banned kite-making in the province of Punjab. Women, who comprise the bulk of the industry, were also more vulnerable due to less opportunities for alternative employment.

Kite flying in Pakistan is a custom intrinsically tied up with the annual Basant festival, during which bright yellow colors are displayed to celebrate the coming of springtime. In the country’s cultural capital of Lahore, Basant was fast becoming one of South Asia’s most popular attractions, drawing tens of thousands of visitors from all over the globe to witness and join in the kite flying spectacular. But even as its popularity heightened, the festival’s tragedies were dragging it down, and kite flying picked up a reputation for all the wrong reasons.



Owing to the rising public outcry over the kite-related death toll, in late 2005, a ban was imposed on the manufacture, sale and flying of kites. This led to mass protests by kite flying enthusiasts and people whose livelihoods depend on the kite trade, which in turn prompted the ban to be relaxed for several weeks. Despite a number of fatalities, the ban was again temporarily lifted for Basant in 2007 – but at a cost as eleven were killed and many more injured in all too familiar circumstances. Hundreds of people have been arrested for use of illegal kite lines or flying kites when prohibited to do so.



Today Basant remains unscheduled, the ban is in force, and only the occasional speck of a kite drifts across the Lahore skyline. Even so, with kite flying season about to take off again ready for spring, people anticipate and watch the horizon. The ban is not only restricted to Basant but stretches out the entire year and stops anyone from kite flying. This has greatly affected the kite making community. While the general populace has qualms about missing the celebration of Basant festivals, the more affected are those who lost their means of livelihood and are now living in intense poverty.

Kite flying has been banned by Punjab government due to the hazardous wire used. It used to be a homebased work done by families living in the walled city of Lahore and Shalimar town of Lahore. There was a time when kite flying was associated with spring festivity in Lahore and people from all over Pakistan used to travel to Lahore to celebrate basnat and spring. Internationally too it was very famous and promoted tourism, thus generating revenue. Colorful kites were prepared in Lahore and sent to other cities like Karachi, Faisalabad and Multan. Kite making has helped families to have decent living. HBWs are now suffering due to unemployment so much so that due to increasing poverty, women are into prostitution and men resort to accepting odd jobs. With inflation and rising unemployment, there is a need to encourage the cottage industry to flourish and boost informal sector employment.

Kite making groups and families switched to the other livelihood options— daily wage laboring, street vending, domestic service, etc., at even lower daily wage arrangements because they had no other particular skill to compete in the market. About 70% of families had lesser food and had to stop sending their children to school because they could not afford their education anymore. Parents had to leave younger children at home with neighbors and/or elder children so that they could go in search of work elsewhere. Many home-based workers, especially women, suffered from anxiety because of perpetual stress.

Due to the loss of employment, many families forced their children to work, at even more risky and unhealthy places, just to make ends meet. Before kite flying was banned the children were already working at home but under parental supervision.

Unavailability of conveyance/transport is a big challenge for women kite makers.

Other key challenges include poor health, clogged sewage, unclean water, and unavailability of electricity. The ban not only rendered thousands of women and families jobless. It also affected the other sectors like bamboo, thread, glue, and paper industries. According to a survey conducted by Home Net Pakistan, 59% of kite makers were between 20 and 30 years of age, meaning that the population involved in this sector is relatively young. The 30-40 year age group makes up 30% of the kite making industry. However, it is important to note that about 80% of kite-makers are illiterate with nearly only 10% passing primary school while the rest have completed middle school. The study also indicated that they have been making kites for about 10 years involving other family members in the kite making processes. At least 53% of families made kites for 5 to 10 hours a day, while the rest worked longer hours.

While many workers have already left kite making, there are still 67% involved in the kite making profession but not as regularly as they were doing before. They are earning 500 to 2000 rupees per week depending upon the availability of work. Though the kites are sold in other provinces, 71% of the interviewees said they faced difficulty in accessing new markets. The majority of those interviewed (61%) said they worked through middlemen to get access to the market which limited their share of the net income. Incidence of the involvement of children below 15 was also found in the study. Nearly 14% of children from the kite maker households were involved in kite making. A significant number of kite makers learned the skill from the family while 11% learned the art through proper training acquired from professional kite makers. Only 28% of children were enrolled in schools while the rest remains out of school as parents are unable to pay tuition fees. Housing patterns and health of the kite makers were found to be very alarming.



About 84% of kite-makers lived in one- to two- room houses and only 43% had access to clean drinking water. Only about 40% were covered by social security or other schemes making it difficult for them in times of illnesses.

There is a prevalence of early marriages and the number of children varied from three to seven. Slum residency, inadequate living space, larger and combined family type, have pushed them to vulnerable situations when their income channel has also been affected by the ban on kite making. Food insecurity, low access to education, health, and clothing were likewise reported.

Organizing through Homenet Pakistan

The groups were scattered and unorganized. The home-based women kite makers were organized into groups on the basis of the membership based concept by Homenet Pakistan. Initial attempts to organize were difficult because they would not allow anyone to intervene, having strict orders from their men. Homenet Pakistan strategized through an intervention with men by holding dialogues with men kite makers and sensitizing them on human rights and labor rights.

The kite makers were not working as an enterprise. They were self employed, working as a family business, with women supporting their families by working as home-based workers. Others work on piece rate and as contracted work. Having more kite makers in Jhang, MBOs of home-based kite makers were organized with support from local members together with those in Lahore. The group in Jhang is in a process of registration as a union.



After becoming organized as MBOs, the women started working on alternative skills. Four women kite makers received training on stitching and started a small business of their own. They were assisted by HomeNet in getting funds /loans for their businesses. Lahore College for Women University provided 100,000/-Rs after signing an MOUs with HomeNet Pakistan. Every member of the group can receive 25,000/-Rs. Homenet



Pakistan monitors the business of the group. The University also assists in providing the women with alternative

skills in embroidery and stitching. Work orders were received from the girls in the University, which even offered a center within the university area to these women to exhibit their clothes and embroidered products.

Capacity development activities for the workers in kite making have been conducted around human rights and women's rights. Dialogues with the major or key players in the value chain like the retailers, buyers, sellers, thread makers, kite flyers have been done to sensitize them on women's perspectives and issues involved in the whole value chain. The economic fundamentals and feminization of poverty linked with the sector was discussed. The means to overcome these problems were also discussed in larger meetings. Also, recommendations were sought from them on how to provide security and shelter to the women in this sector. In order to provide economic security to the women at large, the theme of providing alternative skills to the women led to confidence and trust building among the community. HomeNet Pakistan is assisting women who are struggling to get interest-free loans by linking them with microfinance institutions like Akhuwat which would

enable access of interest free loans for HBWs for starting their businesses. Understanding the benefits of organizing, the women are very much willing to merge with other local level social

Saima Bibi, a resident of Kot Lakhpat, Lahore said, "I used to make kites when I was only eight years old. I used to help my mother in kite making process. After marriage, as my husband was also in the kite making business, I continued to help him as well. We were earning a handsome amount of money to raise our family. Current financial crunch has pushed us into deep poverty as both of us do not know any other skill. For me, working as a domestic worker is also not permissible". "At this point of my life, with children to raise and a family to support, I don't know where to explore new skills. We, as kite makers for the last 150 years, never felt the need to learn any other skill."

enterprises to be able to resolve their community based issues of income generation and access to information leading to linkages with government schemes of protection for women.



Integration of thread and trees makes a strong women's enterprise: Towards solidarity economy development

By Poonsap S. Tulaphan

Panmai group was established in 1991 by women weavers in Roi-Ed province in the northeastern part of Thailand. Panmai means various kinds of plants and the group adopted the name "Panmai" because its members are weavers who produce traditional handwoven silk and cotton with natural dyes from various kinds of plants and trees.

Northeastern people are farmers who grow rice with no irrigation system and they only rely on natural rain. Unfortunately, their lands are not fertile and prone to drought resulting in low production yields and the income is not adequate for household expenses. Men need to migrate to big cities to look for temporary or permanent jobs as taxi drivers and construction workers. Women, older persons and children are left at home waiting for income from their husbands or sons. But these women have weaving and sericulture skills passed along from their ancestors.

In 1985, the Appropriate Technology Association (ATA), an NGO promoting participatory technology development, came to support those who were then developing hand woven products with natural dyes. Their products are made from silk and hand spun cotton thread woven with hand looms. Raw materials come from many kinds of plants and trees which they use as dye. After a few years of experimenting on which parts of trees, bark, wood, leaves or fruits could give beautiful and fast dyed color, these weavers were able to produce quality products with new designs and were able to market in the city. They are quite proud of their handicraft products produced from chemical-free materials and with traditional artisanal skills.

When they started to market their products in late 1989 they realized two main issues. First, middlemen control the price of the products making their profits not even commensurate to their hard work. Second was the question of "sustainability" for the future. After a year of discussions, these women formed a social enterprise group called "Panmai".

Panmai as a social enterprise

Panmai is a community based enterprise comprised of 272 women weavers from 8 communities around Kaset Waisai, Suwan-naphumi and Pratumrat District in Roi-Ed province. It is an informal group not yet registered with the government agency but its practices are like those of a cooperative where each member needs to be a shareholder. Each member cannot hold more than 10 shares costing 100 Baht per share. Panmai acts as a marketing unit for its members and sell through various kinds of channels - retail at its showroom and exhibitions, wholesale through other social enterprises, and consignment through handicraft shops that they can trust. With support from the academe and ATA, Panmai leaders received several trainings to manage their business such as quality control, design, bookkeeping, accounting, pricing and marketing.

Panmai as a social enterprise has been operating its business since 1991. Because of seasonality, business revenues are not always good every year, members learn lessons and try to improve

despite constraints. Seasonality is another factor. At times Panmai had lots of inventories and for some years it had good returns. Fortunately, Panmai's leaders and members could develop their management practices linking women with an agricultural background to a modern marketing system. Although the group still have inadequate business management skills, Panmai was able to establish a management system that helps strengthen and maintain their cohesion as a social enterprise group.

Participatory management

is one success factor that they consider in their managing the business enterprise as a group. In terms of its governance structure, each small group elects committees from which the executive board members are nominated from different zones and different



small groups to enable members raise their concerns and opinions through their representatives. The executive committee has a three-year term. Panmai hired three staff members for its business operations in Kaset Wisai and Bangkok. Staff and the committees meet every three months to develop, monitor and assess the organization's implementation of its plans. The committees develop annual plans, propose dividend fund, and share their proposal with members during their annual meeting. Members are made aware of Panmai's business operations through its committees.

Every year, Panmai determines orders and shares production among members. Orders are placed according to different types of weaving skills to involve all members. Pricing is reviewed periodically in the context of the economic situation and cost of raw materials. Pricing is determined after considering the cost of raw materials, labor and fixed cost. Leaders, staff and members of Panmai emphasize the principal goal of its business not to gain lots of profit but to maintain and sustain its business. Panmai can survive and go on if members are employed and are fairly paid.

Quality control and guaranteed natural products

The leaders of the group committee divide their roles as production committee and marketing committee. If members cannot produce sufficient raw materials, these leaders together with Panmai staff will look for raw materials, such as silk, cotton and hemp, lac dye and yellow wood to serve members' needs and to obtain good quality but chemical-free raw materials. Committee members provide consultancy and training if there is a need in the production process. Marketing committees are responsible for checking product quality and grading before all the products are sent to market at the Panmai show-



room. They believe that success of their business good quality products.

Members' commitment

Weavers need skill and patience to produce traditional hand woven and naturally dyed products because it takes time to prepare and dye silk thread for weaving. Preparing silk thread involves collecting plants or tree branches, burning them to get ash, and make alkaline water for degumming the silk thread. After degumming, they have to check whether the thread is clean or not. Twisting is the last step to make it strong enough for weaving.

The dyeing process is also time consuming and labor intensive. Leaves or bark of the trees are dried in the sun and soaked for at least one night to allow the color to come out. Then the dyeing and mordant process is done to fix the color. For some colors such as black which need to be ebony dyed, the silk yarn is placed in a dyeing pot and then dried in the sun for days. If the weavers use chemical dyeing or factory yarn, they can finish the process in a short time. To complete a piece of traditional hand woven naturally dyed product, Panmai members need to work with their heart, commitment and patience. If they cheat by using factory silk yarn or chemical dye-stuff, consumers will stop supporting their products. High grade quality products will generate more profit.

Commitment is an important value among Panmai members and they are not supposed to sell their products individually to consumers. They need to sell through the Panmai system and Panmai markets their products at guaranteed prices. Normally, middlemen will try to buy only quality products and leave behind poor quality products with Panmai. This helps low-skilled weavers to have opportunity to practice and help Panmai to have both high and low quality products for the market enabling them to gradually improve their skills.

Collective Bargaining and Fair Trade Approach

More than 25 percent of Panmai products are exported to other social enterprises or fair trade organizations in Europe and Japan. Some 50 percent of the products are sold to other social enterprises within the country. Bargaining on price is made collectively at the group level and backed up with data from members. Economic situation, price of raw materials, and other related issues are considered. Members cannot bargain individually with consumers. Although Panmai does not have a certification yet from Fair Trade Organizations, it practices Fair Trade principles.

Sharing benefits fairly

Panmai has developed a system of sharing benefits fairly at all levels. Once Panmai purchases members' products, 8 percent of the purchasing price will be returned as group management cost. To this amount of money is added another 2 percent from individual sale amount. This 10 percent is kept as the group fund allocated for three purposes: (1) for transportation expense, stationery cost, and other costs related to group management activities; (2) for sharing among the group committee for their hard work in product development, quality control and



working with Panmai; and (3) for other purposes such as donating to a social activity in the community.

The Panmai board members receive honoraria for meetings and accident insurance fee from the Panmai Group. If any of the members has new designs for products which can lead to good sale for Panmai

Group, this member will get an incentive for her design. If Panmai staff can run a good business, they are likewise entitled to bonuses and salary increases. The system of sharing benefits all levels and keeps Panmai business going until today.

Transparency and accountability

Panmai staff prepares an annual financial statement which is audited by an external auditor. The audited financial statement is shared among board members and presented during the annual meeting.

Communication with consumers

As a promotional strategy, products of Panmai have stories to communicate and educate consumers about various issues such as the value of social enterprise, environmental friendly products, sustainable development and women's empowerment. Consumers become aware that buying a product of Panmai is for a cause. It is not merely a handicraft item but also a product that raises awareness on social, environmental, women and development issues.

Networking with other informal workers

The Panmai group has forged strong linkages between Panmai members and other informal workers in Thai society. Panmai group applied to be a member of Homenet Thailand 10 years ago to share their experience with others and scale up the issues of informal workers at policy level. Panmai together with other Homenet members advocate for social protection such as expansion of the social security scheme to cover informal workers.

Looking back and looking ahead

1. Creating jobs and income security from traditional cloth

Panmai members can raise their income regularly from weaving activity. They normally work on rice farming for six months while the other six months are spent on weaving activities. Earning from weaving at home makes women proud and they enjoy having additional income to help sustain the family— to send their children to school, invest in farming inputs, or for home consumption.

In addition, Panmai members support other women producers in buying raw materials such as silk yarn and hand spun cotton from other small farmers in the surrounding area. Mutual help alleviates the economic situation and empowers Panmai members and others in the value chain.

2. Raising the capacity and changing the status of women

Panmai members play the traditional gender roles of taking care of the house and the family and do not even have the opportunity to go out to the big city. They use their knowledge and skills in weaving to be economically active and helps them de-

The Artisans Association of Cambodia (AAC) is a membership-based organization for crafts producers and sellers in Cambodia established in 2001 under the coordinated effort of the World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) to promote new approaches for the socio-economic integration of landmine survivors, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. AAC became a member of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) in 2005, WFTO Asia in early 2006, and HomeNet South East Asia (HNSEA) in June 2008. It registered the Artisans' Collection (AC) with the Ministry of Commerce as a company LTD in late 2008. Together with its member organizations, AAC aims at creating employment opportunities for landmine survivors, people with disabilities, women and other vulnerable groups through small and medium craft production and sales.

Currently, AAC has over 40 member organizations consisting of 2,655 employees and producers, and another five organizations are applying for membership. Majority or 73.22% of employees and producers in member organizations are women while 12.76% are people with disabilities. About 67.5% of the member organizations are managed and directed by women.

HomeNet Cambodia, which is one of AAC's projects supported by HomeNet South Asia, was established in 2009 and works closely with homebased workers. To date, almost 600 home-based workers have been organized by HomeNet Cambodia as a membership-based organization (MBO) in four areas: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang, and Poi Pet. Mostly having no workshop of their own, the producers need to work at home, but group leaders assist to share information regarding markets and sometimes collect their products to sell to buyers.

For many of these enterprises, breaking the cycle of dependence has been a continuing struggle. Challenges faced include low production capacity, high cost of raw materials, low quality and limited products, inadequate marketing strategies and limited exposure to western markets despite an increasing demand in the market. There is a need for assistance in product design and marketing to develop appropriate products and promote their organizations to foreign clients. Language is also a problem and not taking advantage of technology through computer illiteracy lead to isolation and lack of growth for the producers and the organizations as a whole. Other challenges and problems faced include high inflation rate that triggers increase in cost of raw materials, prices of basic utilities such as energy (gas, petroleum, and electricity), and labor cost. Migration affects education of children, family medical expenses, and livelihood.

AAC and HomeNet Cambodia supports the homebased producers, mostly women (many of whom are widows, single parents, and heads of household), survivors of HIV-AIDS and human trafficking, and youth. They work in their individual houses and some work with a group in a common workplace or neighboring production workshop. AAC facilitates access to markets, develops social enterprise groups with emphasis on fair trade wages, gender equity, occupational safety and health and environmental protection.



Aside from generating employment for women and vulnerable groups, the women became actively involved in decision making and are now able to speak in public, participate in social activities while taking responsibilities traditionally assumed by men. They receive the same wage as their male counterparts and gradually won the respect of their husbands and families. This advocacy on solidarity economy model allows homebased worker artisans' products to reach high quality as well as adhere to ethical standards through social marketing and command better prices from foreign buyers.

AAC provides technical assistance to social enterprises that are members and non-members through advocacy, promotion of fair trade practices, trade facilitation/export, organizing a business enterprise, and other consultancy services on marketing and trade promotion.

The social enterprises assisted by Homenet Cambodia and AAC are producers and suppliers of both local and international buyers of various products made from cotton, silk, palm, sedge/reed, wood, stone, lotus yarn, recycled plastic bags/papers, fibers, bamboo, cattle horn, and water hyacinth made into fashion handbags, gift items, recycled rice bags, scarves, and houseware and decorative items.

Adhering to the ethical values of social enterprises, profits are re-invested in the entire program in the form of enterprise expansion, human resource development, study tours, staff retreat, health support, and bonuses. Profits are plowed back to the organization to help and enhance capacity of members.

When AAC introduced the concept of social enterprise to groups of homebased workers, they appreciated the importance of being a social enterprise and practiced the values of mutual help and cooperation. They became conscious that they are not working for profit alone but they have a significant role and contribution to their group and to the society as a whole.

As social enterprises, producers get a steady supply of raw materials through group bulk orders, repeat orders from buyers, feedback from buyers and command higher prices for export products. Short courses/training on business plan development to increase production capacity and sales, learning languages/IT by themselves, and on the job training are among the benefits of SEs. In addition, these member groups are able to access market development and design/product development training by AAC. They also benefit from positive collaboration with AAC and the Ministry of Commerce, which provides opportunities for them to attend international and local trade fairs.



AAC is a member of WFTO; WFTO Asia organized World Fair Trade Day in May with

The Supply Chain and Its Participants: Benefits, Problems, Solutions

Participants in the value chain include raw material suppliers, producers, middlemen, intermediaries, transportation providers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers/end users. Main determinants of participants in the value chain are reliability, price, and reputation. In the value chain, enterprises select suppliers who can deliver on time, and most buyers are facilitated by AAC and by themselves. Competitive prices offered by the buyers and organizational values are likewise considered.

The social enterprises have their own regular suppliers for their raw materials. Groups of HBW enterprises get their raw material from different suppliers, usually from neighboring countries, and they have the flexibility to change their suppliers depending on their needs. There is no formal written agreement between social enterprises of HBWs and their suppliers and even with AAC/Homenet Cambodia.

The main benefit which the enterprise gets from its suppliers is getting raw materials on time. Though they get discounts from suppliers based on specification order, quality and quantity, they also experience some problems such as unstable price, uncertainty in quantity of raw materials, requiring full payment instead of installment, and only verbal negotiations without any contracts on terms and conditions before placing orders. Enterprises rarely make complicated or written contracts with their buyers. Most of the time they just communicate through email or appointment/calling for ordering and payment. However, a written contract is usually required for big volumes of orders and the enterprise cannot switch to other buyers because the buyer wants loyalty and exclusiveness of the design and we are members of World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).



The social enterprises usually have no regular buyers, but they have repeat buyers and new buyers. Seasonality of sales especially from overseas buyers is also a problem to the producers. Most of their products are sold to big wholesalers especially those for export while local shops also serve as showcases for local buyers too. The shops provide prototypes of their products that allow foreign buyers to determine the type, product and quality of items they want to order.

Among the benefits which the enterprises get from their buyers include repeat orders, payment of fair prices, feedback for product and service improvement, better understanding about market demands, regular jobs for producers, and charity for supporting poor producers. However, if there are delays in delivery of orders, buyers pay late or even lose interest to continue transactions. Most buyers are commercial buyers demanding large volume, fast delivery, and quality production. They are strict with time of delivery. Enterprises have taken some steps to solve these problems. Before they accept the orders from buyers, they make sure there are enough producers and raw materials and that there are clear terms and conditions regarding delivery time, etc. They also require the following terms of payment: 50% up-front when orders are confirmed before production, while another 50% will be made before shipping the products to buyers' port destination.



Services, Upscaling, and Ownership

The enterprises need technical assistance on design/product development, business development, export facilitation, and market access. AAC has facilitated all the processes of exportation with buyers and government agencies, Ministry of Commerce, and other stakeholders. Various training activities have been conducted focusing on technical skills development, enterprise management, designing and product development, occupational safety and health (OSH), and others related to capacity building. Other services that the social enterprises need include transportation (Trade Forwarders: DHL, Cambodia Express etc). Some enterprises have a plan to engage in processing and some others plan to expand more shops to sell to final customers. There are enterprises that have taken over various activities in the supply chain. In the experience of AAC, Craft Village and Ta Prohm are examples of those that have leveled up. Craft Village has been engaged in processing, while Ta Prohm has expanded its shops in the commercial area. Craft Village is no longer outsourcing the products from weavers from distant areas but instead set up a weaving center for its own weavers. It no longer consigns its products to other shops because it has its own shop to sell to importers and end consumers.

Investment funds can be availed from other sources but the enterprises cannot comply with requirements and criteria (accounting system, sound business plan, share cost by borrower etc.) Banks and microfinance institutions require collateral which is a difficulty among HBWs. Based on experience, social enterprises (AAC members) expand their shop and/or put up or expand their production using the profits generated from existing business.

Developing a Social Solidarity Economy

There are many enterprises that buy products from social enterprises (AAC members). At the same time, these enterprises also sell services to other social enterprises. For a real example: a hotel orders uniforms, silk curtains, cushion covers, bed covers, etc. from AAC's members, and the same hotel sells services to social enterprises like accommodation, room/hall for conference/training workshop, consignment, place/space for trade fair etc. These social enterprises are in the form of cooperative (e.g., Watthan-AAC member); self-help group (e.g., Taphrom- AAC member); sole proprietorship (e.g.: Sentosa- AAC member); and family-based enterprise (e.g.: Kravan House-non AAC member). The types of business transaction and activities they engage in are: handicraft consignment; order and supply; and service/rental contract.

Measuring SSE Performance

Indicators currently being used by social enterprises to measure their performance include:

- Number of beneficiaries reached
- Monthly income of producer/staff (Livable wage)
- Annual turn-over
- Degree of independence (management and finance)
- Increase in self confidence
- Morality or adherence to ethical values of fair trade
- Wage increases
- Degree of public awareness of the project

Leadership and Social Solidarity Economy: Initiatives from the Ground– PATAMABA Region VI

PATAMABA Region VI started as a small village chapter in 1992. Membership then quickly spread to 47 village chapters in rural and urban areas, in 12 municipalities/cities and in 4 provinces in the Western Visayas Region -Antique, Capiz, Iloilo and Negros Occidental.

Initiatives in organizing homebased women and informal workers in urban areas are a new initiative adopted by PATAMABA Region VI which are deeply rooted in PATAMABA's experiences and programs in the rural areas. Going back from the time when PATAMABA Region VI has done intensive organizing, networking, training and capacity building for their members in 1992, valuable results have transpired in terms of getting more informal and women homebased workers organized, capacitated and politically visible.

In 2003 PATAMABA Region VI was able to get funding from TESDA to implement the pilot project for community-based training for economic empowerment in Region VI. TESDA provided the amount of Php 670,000 for a food-processing training cum production project where more than a hundred members (45 from Sta Barbara, 30 in Antique, 30 in Carles, and 25 in Molo) mostly women participated in. Out of this grant, the group was able to save some Php120,000 which they used as seed capital for their Microfinance Program (MFP). The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) also provided funds (Php40,000) to procure equipment such as freezers and meat grinder in addition to training. The Foundation for Sustainable Societies Inc. (FSSI) provided Php850,000 as seed capital for microfinance. To date the Fund has increased to Php1.9 million. At present there are about 600 beneficiaries of microfinance with a repayment rate of 95 to 97 percent.

PATAMABA Region VI through the leadership of Maria Nebla or Mayeng as called by her colleagues, has proven its capacity to make a small fund grow and to use it efficiently. Having a shared vision of growth and sustainability, Mayeng does all these to enable members to be trained and earn income after which they are also given access to a little seed capital from PATAMABA's **Microfinance Fund** and savings generated from their various activities. The leaders have adopted a lending and collection scheme system based on regular monthly visits to every chapter and borrowers have shown exemplary credit discipline which enabled them to avail of higher loans when they needed these for their business and other economic activities. What is worth noting is that PATAMABA Region VI members employ “local and indigenous” knowledge and experiences, participatory approaches, and put into practice “self-help” and values of cooperativism to build women-led cooperatives and group enterprises. To date, the chapter has succeeded in building two successful multi-purpose cooperatives - one in Sta. Barbara, and the other in Carles, Iloilo.



Members have realized achieving a level of empowerment within the home, the organization, and the community due to participation in the program. This is attributed to the integrated approach to women's empowerment which combines strategies such as awareness raising, community organizing, capability building, accessing resources (credit, technology, markets, etc.), social protection, lobbying, advocacy, and networking. It has also facilitated the formation of group enterprises to address the need for an alternative livelihood. PATAMABA Region VI independently manages its microfinance program with savings and mutual aid components. To be more responsive to the needs of its members, the microfinance program has integrated a mutual aid scheme called “Damayan Program” which helps them in cases of emergency.



Efforts to push for social protection resulted in the following:

1. Sentrong Sigla provides free health services and medicines
2. Women's Crisis Center
3. Mutual Aid (Damayan Fund)
4. SSS membership coverage (currently covers 480 members)
5. AlkanSSSy Program of the SSS (10 members from PATAMABA and others from vendors and small tricycle drivers and operators)
6. PHILHEALTH coverage for 1,500 members

Access to livelihood training is the most common issue being advocated by the homebased and other informal workers aside from being visible in several campaigns on problems related to garbage disposal, lack of affordable housing, flooding, health issues including reproductive health, and social protection issues such as lack of knowledge on how to become members of the Social Security System and of the Philhealth. A more tangible result of their advocacy efforts was when members enrolled with the SSS, Philhealth and Red Cross.

Another challenge that tested the cohesiveness of the group was when massive destruction of livelihood due to natural calamities such as floods and typhoons made them more aware of the need for resiliency especially in times of disasters. Their experience brought about by the devastations of Typhoon Frank made them more active in their advocacy with the local government bodies. PATAMABA Iloilo Chapter was very successful in its campaign to secure housing for their members through an LGU-community led partnership program in the urban settlements planning and development program of Iloilo City. The inspiration for the good collaboration is based on strong and active communities on the ground. Group leaders from the three relocation sites provided support to the Chapter President in organizing and raising awareness on their plight as homebased and informal workers. This further increased member-

Informal Workers & Home Based Workers in Thailand Context

by Suntaree Saeng-ging, HomeNet Thailand

Editors' Note: *The author gave the following presentation during the Regional Consultative Meeting on 25-26 September in Bangkok sponsored by the Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC) on the theme "Labour Rights and*

Decent Work for Working Women in Asia". She also presented the Thai situation during the Asian Roundtable on Social Security (AROSS) also sponsored by AMRC and held 21-22 October at the University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR).

Thailand has a population of about 65.98 million and 45 million belong to the work force. About 38.7 million are employed, of which 17.6 million or 46% are women. Workers in the formal sector number 14.6 million (7.7 %). Informal workers, on the other hand, comprise 24.1 millions (62.3 %) of whom 13.0 million (53.9%) are males and 11.1 million (46.1%) are females. There are 549,803 homebased workers, of whom 76.3% are women.

By sector, informal workers numbered 24.1 million of whom 60.0% are in the Agriculture Sector; 31.4% to the Trade and Service Sector : and 8.6% are in the Product Sector (or Home-based Workers-HBW).

According to the Thai Development Research Institute (TDRI) the Informal Workers' contribution to the country's GDP amounts to 2.33 billions (45.6%).

The main problems of HBWs in Thailand are as follows:

1. Occupational safety and health (OSH): 39.9 %
2. Unfair wages : 28.2 %
3. Irregular job : 25.8 % (National Statistic Office : 2005)
4. Invisibility
5. Lack of labor laws
6. No social security scheme
7. Inadequate state provision for services
8. Lack of bargaining power

Homenet Thailand's advocacy and mobilization efforts focus on :

- Organizing / Strengthening informal workers organizations / network
- Raising awareness of HBWs on workers' rights
- Improving working conditions
- OSH - Occupational Safety and Health Policy; and
- Legal advocacy to provide social security, welfare and services for informal workers according to ILO conventions and decent work principles

Homenet Thailand has been successful in pushing for the enactment of the **Homebased Workers Protection Act of 2010** which calls for the provision of fair wages ; i.e., the remuneration of HBWs shall not be lower than the minimum wage prescribed under the Thai Labor Protection Act for work of similar quality and /or quantity. On OSH , it prohibits the employer to employ, provide and supply harmful, hazardous and unsafe products and materials. Loss of and damage to health, loss of life from work, medical care, health rehabilitation, funeral/cremation, must be the responsibility of the employers.

The **Social Security Act Amendment for the Protection of Informal Workers known as Article 40**, specifically covers informal workers' compensation for illness, maternity, disability, death and retirement pension. The Government will shoulder 30 % of the fees incurred.

The **Ministerial Regulation on the Protection of Domestic Workers 2012** entitles domestic workers to have day off each week, festival holidays and annual holidays and the right to enjoy benefits of sick leave.

Homenet Thailand strongly advocates for the **National Health Security System in terms of OSH** specifically on the National Health Security Act 2002 which has the objective to provide universal health care to cover all Thai people. Homenet Thailand has representatives in some committees to advocate OSH in the National Health Security System by working with Primary Care Units and Local Administrative Organizations to develop pilot program and operational area on OSH for informal workers



SSE Experiences in the PHILIPPINES : PATAMABA Region VI and PKKK experiences

PATAMABA Iloilo—SSE through recycling

The formation of group enterprises and cooperatives by PATAMABA women was aimed to address the need for alternative livelihood in lieu of dwindling resources and lack of opportunities. Social enterprise activities are not centrally motivated by profit but are responsive to women’s desire for economic empowerment where reciprocity, trust, mutual support and community involvement reign. PATAMABA women infuse local and indigenous practices and time-tested experiences into the system.

PATAMABA women believe that Social Solidarity Economy is a model of community-based and locally-based people’s economy. It is a strong tool of empowerment and social change that starts from the initiatives of responsible citizens to keep control of the way they are producing, consuming, saving, investing, and exchanging.

Programs and services include livelihood loans, savings mobilization/capital build-up, skills training, awareness-raising (gender issues, reproductive health, ILO 177), community organizing, entrepreneurship development, marketing assistance, access to housing and emergency assistance (through DAMAYAN) and campaign to enrol members in social insurance schemes towards greater women’s participation and empowerment.

A member of the Sta. Barbara Municipal Solid Waste Management Board under the Recycling Sector in Iloilo thought of spearheading a recycling activity, which began with training. PATAMABA members were among those trained after which PATAMABA initiated organizing and subsequent formation of a group enterprise (from among its members) on eco-bags production. The group engaged in the recycled products are 16 women members (collectors, washers and driers, glue handlers, and sewers) The local government unit in Sta. Barbara provided an area at the public market, procured sewing machines and gave an initial capital of Php10,000 for the recycling project. After one year of operations, it has generated Php 210,000 in sales.



PKKK—Women’s Market

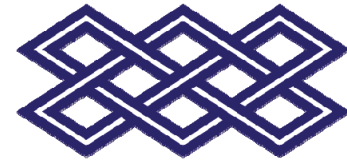
In celebration of the International Rural Women’s Day and World Food Day in October, the Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK– National Rural Women’s Congress), along with fellow advocates of food security and sustainable livelihoods, held the 4th Women’s Market on 16-18 October 2012 at the Quezon City Hall Plaza. This experience provided valuable lessons.

The Women’s Market promoted the concept of an alternative market for local products of rural women and their communities. It adopted the concept of “TABO” (Cebuano term for meeting or gathering which refers to the regular “market day”), where the market serves as a gathering of people to buy, sell and/ or exchange their products, to meet and share with other community members, and to recreate, learn new concepts and skills. It is a place where producers commune with consumers and partners and experience cooperation, a practice that is largely missing now in the context of high-end commercial centers. The Women’s Market featured food products that are locally grown and processed; e.g., organic rice, brown rice, vegetables, fruits, confectioneries, dried fish, herbal medicines) and non-food items such as handicrafts and indigenous items as well as advocacy materials. There were also cooking and product dem-



onstrations.

Participation in the Women’s Market made the rural women realize the need to establish rural women social enterprises. Products are plenty but product development is a must to compete in providing healthy food. There is a need for sustained production and sustained supply of products. The women realized the importance of a market study in setting up an enterprise. More importantly, training on social entrepreneurship is needed.



CRAFT LINK

Sustainable Handicraft development project processes *by Tran Tuyet Lan*

Craft Link is a Vietnamese not-for-profit fair trade organization founded in 1996 that seeks to assist small Vietnamese craft producers to develop their businesses and find market opportunities in a changing economy. It helps ethnic communities, disadvantaged groups and traditional crafts producers to revive culture and improve livelihoods through handicraft production and marketing. It also aims to educate the public about handicraft producers and their products. Handicraft producers are assisted to access new markets through Craft Link shops and bazaars, developing new product designs, business training in marketing, quality control, basic accounting, and price setting. Being a member of the Asian Fair Trade Federation since 2000 enabled entry into European and US markets. Products are also consigned to big hotels in Vietnam.

Three of the original groups emerged as a result of the project that trained the Black Thai, Nung and Ta Oi ethnic groups using their traditional weaving and embroidery skills. Mai Handicraft initiated a group of Vietnamese social workers to create employment for street children and disadvantaged women. Also producing are disadvantaged girls with quilting skills, and a Hue woodcarver with disability.

At present Craft Link has 63 producer groups of which 45% are ethnic communities, 25% are disadvantaged groups, and 30% are traditional villagers.

Craft Link applies the triple bottom approach towards a solidarity economy. It is committed to work with producers who need their services.

People share its vision and are willing to invest time and energy to make the vision a reality. Profit is used to invest for organizational development activities and for developing new products and handicraft projects. It is also used to create a loan facility for ethnic groups who need capital for raw materials or production tools and equipment. Groups should demonstrate environmental consciousness to qualify for assistance from Craft Link.

To assist and promote ethnic skills and crafts, artisans' groups are chosen according to three criteria:

fair wages among producer workers, consciousness on workers' safety, and environmental consciousness. After assessing the artisans' groups on their skills, situation and needs, Craft Link then decides on developing a project with the group.



3. Raising environmental awareness

Consumers have learned to support environmental conservation as they purchase products from the Panmai Group. Have earth tone colors and simple designs using natural dyes, buyers appreciate Panmai’ efforts to produce environment - friendly products.

For producers, there is a question whether Panmai members destroy the community forest or preserve trees and the environment. In the beginning, weavers cut tree branches or get tree roots to get quality dye materials. Later on, after a series of discussions and monitoring, Panmai members realized the value of trees that they now know how to use parts of trees and preserve them for future use. Trees give them food, medicines, materials for housing, clean air and most importantly, raw materials for their production. They experiment to get color from leaves and barks or parts of branches in a manner that does not destroy trees. In the past, they get allergies from chemical dyeing but now that they use natural dyeing materials they are free from harm.

4. Developing relations with government agencies

Panmai members are located in remote areas. In the past they hardly got access to government support or they had bad experience with government agencies. After forming a strong organization, they went out and displayed their products participating in several exhibitions. Their story was published in many women’s magazines. The government agencies came to them and provided support by providing marketing space to Panmai group when they organized an OTOP (One Tambon One Product) sale. Relations between women members and governmental authorities are increasingly being improved. Panmai Group members have learned to work with local authorities and expand their relations to cover other aspects, thus accessing more government resources and



support.

HNSEA Self-Organized Activity (SOA) [Cont'd from page 3]

revive culture and improve livelihoods through handicraft producing and marketing. (See p. 13 for Tran Tuyet Lan’s article).

Maria Nebla, President of PATAMABA Region VI, presented “Solidarity Initiatives from the ground on sustainable livelihood, social protection, climate changes and food security” among communities of HBWs in the Philippines. (See page 12).

Mary delos Santos, President of Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) talked about their experience on “Women’s Market”.

Lucita Lazo synthesized the SOA for HNSEA during the plenary and emphasized HNSEA’s concept and vision of SSE as well as next step regarding advocacy, networking, and SSE development. Aside from being inclusive, SSEs are collectively organized and oriented, meaning they are owned by the community and are for the community. Connectivity emphasizes the supply chain where communities mutually support and empower each other. Social solidarity builds bargaining power with local authorities, private sector and other stakeholders. It is gender responsive and sensitive to the needs of men and wo-



Panmai Group still needs to move forward to get formal registration to resolve some issues. After 20 years of operation, Panmai leaders have planned to buy land to build their own office. However, they need a juridical personality to own the property. In fact, they plan to register as a cooperative but the bureaucratic system in the government agency in charge of cooperatives makes them hesitant to register.

5. Product development and product design

To maintain marketing volume, the Panmai Group needs to develop various types of finished products which are beautiful and can be utilized by consumers.

6. Need for generational continuity

Even though Panmai members have worked for many years with tangible results and impact, members of the young generation still do not want to be trained in weaving and natural dyeing techniques. They prefer to find work in the big city than work in the rural area. The group needs to work hard to pass their history and knowledge to a new generation of weavers.

Conclusion

Panmai Group’s experience shows that working towards a social solidarity economy needs time and a holistic approach. Creating employment for the working poor and social and environmental development should be integrated towards sustainability. Panmai members show that commitment, trust and participation in production, management and marketing are really important. Sharing benefits with all members at all levels means survival not only for members but for the whole organization as well. Collective work can develop economic capacity and raise the status of rural women. Working towards solidarity economy has a positive impact to women weavers, their families and community. On the other hand, strengthening linkages between producers and consumers and between the working poor and governmental authorities fosters respect for human dignity. Mutual help means promoting social solidarity enterprises

men. It aims to preserve culture; it serves the people while protecting the environment.

One of the main challenges aside from competitiveness of products and services is insensitivity among local government units. There is a need to orient local and national officials on SSE and its core values. This means that an agenda around SSE as well as policies, legislation and laws on informal workers need to be pushed through dialogues at the sector level, between local, (and national) government and home-workers. Next steps formulated by the group include: 1) developing frameworks around SSE for combating poverty with a gender lens that focus on women’s rights, needs and priorities.; 2) enhancing social enterprises through technology transfer, sharpening of entrepreneurial skills, and competitive products for the world market to promote economic empowerment; 3) Advocacy efforts to push for local ordinances to promote local products, national laws on workers’ rights, and ratification of international conventions on workers’ rights; and 4) massive information dissemination of SSE concepts to HBWs and networks at local, national, regional and international levels. HNSEA’s role will be to facilitate support services for informal workers and technical support towards sustainability.

Towards Social Solidarity Economy in Laos: The Village Bank Model

By Khanthon Phamuang, ECCDA

The idea of a village bank started in 1997 under the Small Rural Development Project, in cooperation with the Lao Women’s Union and Foundation for Integrated Agricultural Management (FIAM), an NGO from Thailand, together with the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), also from Thailand. Homenet Laos together with an association called Environment Conservation and Community Development Association (ECCDA) supported for the propagation of village banks in Laos. ECCDA was formerly called the Non-profit Association of Lao Development (NALD) and was established in 2004. it evolved from NALD, Homenet Laos focused on community organizing and developing homebased producer groups, providing educational awareness on environmental protection and conservation, and emphasizing the importance of savings through village banks emphasizing the importance of savings groups and the use of revolving funds to strengthen and empower people in the communities, especially women in poverty. Support for HBWs included financial management, production processes, product development and marketing and OSH using the SSE model promoting and edifying the ethical values of solidarity and unity.

At present there are more than 5,000 groups in the Village Banks. In cooperation with the LWU and FIAM’s Project: Small Rural Project for Women, more than 200 saving groups have been established with over 40,000 members since 1997. Likewise, with the LWU and CODI’s Project: Women and Community’s Empowering that started in 2000, some 530 saving groups in 525 village in 22 districts have been set up with over 100,000 members.

Promoting Women’s Leadership and Empowerment

Village savings groups help develop and promote leadership roles and empowerment of individuals in decision making and economic efficiency. Aside from access to financial

capital, women in savings groups have access to joint marketing systems allowing producers’ groups to have access to competitive market and pricing for their products. Networks of savings groups learn from each other and promote raising awareness on caring for the environment which is the main source of raw materials for their production. Their positive relationship with government bodies and organizations associated with government such as the Lao Women’s Union facilitates their growth and development.

To empower the individual women members and for the community as a whole to address poverty, the savings groups’ profits are allocated for savings of the members or reinvested into small businesses and income generating activities. Earnings are also used for education and capacity building activities such as livelihood trainings, leadership skills, product development and other activities to make the organized groups work towards self-reliance and efficiency. The village banks also provide welfare funds for their members.

Members either work in a common workplace with a leader supervising the work while some work in their individual houses to look after their children and do the household activities too. The leader of the group helps in marketing their products while other individuals market their own products in the neighboring communities. The village bank groups are managed by elected committee members mostly women and formulate their own rules and regulations under the guidelines for village banking systems. Membership is voluntary. Given the opportunity to run the village banks, women in the communities appreciate their role in managing and controlling their funds which somehow builds their self-esteem and confidence and allows them to be recognized in their respective communities. Some of them are also able to participate in local politics.



Nongthatai village group, Chanthabuly district, Vientiane established in 2004 with 15 families



Khutsambat village group in Saythany engaged in silkworm production established in 2011 with 16 families



Dongsanghin village group in Saythany established in 2010 with 16 families

SETARA: WOMEN IN COOPERATIVE AND THEIR INITIATIVES ON DRRM

Historically, Indonesia is prone to earthquakes and tsunami. After Mount Krakatau erupted and caused a large tsunami in 1883, there were at least 17 times that the country experienced tsunami for almost a century (1900-1996). Earthquake and tsunami hit Aceh and the northern parts of North Sumatra. in 2004 leaving more than 150,000 people dead.



When the country was hit by disasters, SETARA recommended that members be given a grace period of three months on their loan repayment to allow them to recover from the tragedy. SETARA had an intensive campaign for the Government and the private sector to assist victims of disasters. It also initiated the conduct of a study to develop policies on Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation (DRRM).

The various regions in Indonesia are the critical points of disasters, especially earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and volcanic eruptions. Earthquakes occur almost every year in Indonesia. After the earthquake in Aceh, Nias Island in 2005 and beyond was also hit by the earthquake. Around 1000 people were affected. Yogyakarta in Central of Java was seriously hit by an earthquake in May 2006 and another one in 2010. The death toll reached over 6,000 people and 1.5 million people were left homeless.

DRRM Policies that were developed include the Social security fund raising for members equivalent to monthly contributions of IDR 500 per member. Another on is on the application of a collateral credit risk amounting to 0.5% of total loan and deducted upon release of the loan.



