



Joint publication

Higher Education Knowledge Hubs as an engine towards social entrepreneurship development in Thailand and Myanmar

within the STEPup project:

Strengthening innovative social entrepreneurship practices
for disruptive business settings in Thailand and Myanmar

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NATIONAL MANAGEMENT
DEGREE COLLEGE



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Summary

This joint publication has as a central objective, on one hand, to summarise the results of the case challenge practices within the STEPup project (Strengthening innovative social entrepreneurship practices for disruptive business settings in Thailand and Myanmar, 2020-2023) on regional level focusing on social entrepreneurship and on the other, to present academic knowledge on social entrepreneurship development in South-East Asia through STEPup.

The publication starts with a Prologue by the Project manager, Dr. Lisa Mahajan, who elaborates upon the successes and outcomes the project has managed to achieve despite the turbulent times it was implemented in. Further on, there is a detailed overview linking to both the academic as well as the applied processes of social entrepreneurship growth and development in South-East Asia, focusing in specific on Thailand and Myanmar as project consortium countries where Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hubs have been established within the realm of higher educational institutions.

The latter is followed by a presentation of the case challenges as a work package within the STEPup project implementation. Moreover, this joint publication focuses on the six winning cases of the 4 Thai and 2 Burmese universities and the impact generated as a result of their realization. Each project consortium partner has presented the best-evaluated case within this joint publication, including the impact created on the company and on the developments in the area of social entrepreneurship. There has been a common template followed where one can read in detail about the specifics of each challenge, the desired and achieved impact, as well as the social enterprise and its future aspirations in relation to the HUBS created as an outcome of the STEPup project.

This publication is rounded off with two separate sections on the lessons learned and reflections not only on the content of what has been achieved but also on the process of its implementation.

What is special about this joint piece of work is that it co-creatively builds upon the perspectives of all project consortium partners and is a result of the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the STEPup project.

Prologue

The STEPup consortium is very proud to be able to release this publication that showcases the successful long-term cooperation between multiple actors in a university- business ecosystem focusing on social entrepreneurship. The purpose of this report is to put a well-deserved spotlight on young, creative, and innovative minds that invested a great deal of time into an unknown learning experience that in the end led to the reward of being chosen as the winners within their respective universities.

The activities that took place prior to this publication ran for 6 months in an academic setting by bringing together students, faculty mentors and social entrepreneurs to work towards a joint goal. The difficulties of the pandemic forced the STEPup consortium to conduct all previous actions online, so this first face-to-face interaction within the frame of the case challenge competition added tremendous value to all participants from academia and business.

It was very important for the STEPup consortium to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, willingness to evolve and cooperation within the interactive learning environments at the respective Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hubs. The focus of these specific activities has always been the professional development of the students and their entrepreneurial mindset competencies. Participating student (teams) engaged in active learning settings that elevated their skill sets while simultaneously capacitating faculty members to enhance their teaching in this collaborative learning experience.

The results achieved not only comprise comprehensive business solutions that can be directly implemented by the participating social entrepreneurs but also a strengthened network with a life-long benefit for all participants.

We wish all our students engaged in the case challenge experience a successful continuation of their professional careers!

Social Entrepreneurship Development in SEA

The world today is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA, Nurbantoro, 2021). To address the challenges of such a dynamic, complex world, all disciplines need to come together, clearly understand the situation and values of our diverse societies, co-create products and experiences accordingly, and stay agile and open to change (Terzieva, 2021). In such a VUCA world, since the 1990s, these so-called non-profit self-financed social enterprises have been formed by groups of citizens to serve local communities and social needs (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006), needs such as providing basic and long-standing needs such as clean water, food, shelter, literacy, and medical services. Reaching such social values requires recognition, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities that result in social value as opposed to personal or shareholder wealth, often referred to as social entrepreneurship (Certo & Miller, 2008).

In order to reach their goals, however, social enterprises would need assistance from educational institutions, governments, entrepreneurs, funders, and local communities, the whole social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The results of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in 2016 show that the advancement of social enterprises and entrepreneurship is not the same across the world (Schott, Terjesen & Kew, 2016). While clear measurements of social impact and visibility of such enterprises are still missing, the US and Australia report notably more educated social entrepreneurs; in MENA and Europe, around half of operational social entrepreneurs are highly educated; Sub-Saharan Africa's social entrepreneurs are far less often highly educated than in other global regions.

In Southeast Asia (SEA), there is increasing research on the linkage between education and social entrepreneurship (Sengupta & Sahay, 2017). Malaysia is among the few countries in SEA where students in higher education are highly encouraged to participate in social activities. In Cambodia, social entrepreneurship has been used to battle some of the disasters caused by civil unrest.

Thailand is facing several key social challenges, which include growing inequality, an ageing population, and an underperforming educational system. This has led to an increasing interest in the use of social enterprise to address some of the most pressing issues. Thai governments have been attempting to support social enterprises in different ways. Thai Higher Education Institutions are to be seen as being the leading stakeholders that can help educate social entrepreneurs (Terzieva, Mahajan & Schulte, 2022).

In Myanmar, the social entrepreneurship ecosystem is less developed. It remains by far the poorest of the SEA member states, with poor infrastructure, underdeveloped human resources, and inadequate access to capital (The World Factbook, 2022).

A social enterprise, although a relatively new phenomenon, is becoming extremely popular in Myanmar. One challenge is the survival of social entrepreneurs as they are focused on niche markets. In order to have a lasting impact, they will need to transform to mass markets or replicate their models. More systematic and long-term support, as well as increased cooperation between the government, development partners, and enterprises, will be needed to support the rise of the social entrepreneurship sector beyond its nascent stage in Myanmar (Cheney, 2017).

The societal problems identified in Thailand and Myanmar and the resulting need to invest in social entrepreneurship can only be tackled through relationships between the whole SE ecosystem, as mentioned earlier, universities, social entrepreneurs, the government, and the community. Through the creation of a new generation of social innovators and change-makers, higher education institutions provide a stream of new recruits to social enterprises, thus helping to mainstream this sector while serving the community through service projects.

Through the STEPup project (2020-2023), funded by Erasmus+, there has been created a project consortium, consisting of 6 major higher education institutions in Thailand and Myanmar (information in detail provided in the chapter to follow) and an active social enterprise in Thailand as well as three European higher educational institutions: FH Joanneum, Graz, Austria; Cracow University of Economics, Cracow, Poland; Breda University of Applied Sciences, Breda, the Netherlands. Our common objective has been to create and strengthen existing innovative social entrepreneurship practices for disruptive business settings through the support of Knowledge HUBs as entities within the universities in Thailand and Myanmar.

The project started with the first work package, where a status quo and needs analysis in selected Thai and Burmese regions were developed. Alongside that, existing social entrepreneurship practices in Austria, Poland, and the Netherlands were compiled with, and a Good Practice catalogue was prepared and disseminated amongst partners.

Status-quo and needs analysis of Thai and Burmese regions were conducted via desk research and through focus groups conducted at each of the six representative higher education institutions in those two countries. The main findings through primary and secondary research clearly indicated a lack of required skillsets by both social entrepreneurs and business founders, as well as employees, which was seen as a major cause of concern. Many existing social entrepreneurs come from the not-for-profit area and do not always have background business knowledge. The project, therefore, targeted the required needs. The Good Practices collected in the European countries consisted of successful social enterprises operating in different areas, such as refurbishing consumer goods, packaging-free supermarkets, sustainable cooling technologies and creative industries with employment opportunities for people with mobility issues. The aim was to provide a wide selection of successful businesses that can serve as a learning opportunity for aspiring social entrepreneurs.

In the second phase of the project (Work-Package 2), four blended trainings were provided to the 6 East-Asian university lecturers and students. The implemented capacity building trainings were conducted in the areas of concepts related to social entrepreneurship, social enterprises, identifying the social problem and opting for solutions, business model canvas, and application in social enterprises. The purpose of this second work package was to increase the skill sets of people working in the social entrepreneurship sphere, whether they were teaching the content and/or thinking of establishing a social business themselves. Further, participants of the trainings are considered to be multipliers, passing on the knowledge acquired through further local sessions inviting also external stakeholders at their respective institutions as well as applying the new skills and capabilities in hubs established in phase 3.

Within the third phase, six Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hubs within the Thai and Burmese universities were established. These six HUBs aimed to foster innovation in the field of social entrepreneurship by involving existing social entrepreneurs and entities in general in academia-business-non-for-profit learning activities and cycles of consultancies.

At a later stage, students were encouraged to put their knowledge into practice by participating in a local case challenge, pairing each team of students and staff with one identified disturbed local social enterprise. They jointly discussed and helped solve a complex business problem. The main goal was to foster innovative thinking in students and allow them to act in 'real life' contexts within a secure learning environment. The work culminated in thirty local case challenges and pitching events during which an international jury consisting of project consortium members and regional businesspeople chose a winning student team that provided the best ideas and solutions for the social enterprise's business problem. A sample of the chosen cases is seen in the next section.

Case Challenges

A specific educational model was developed and used within the newly established HUBs (Figure 1), where the goal was (a) to enhance the connection between students, these HUBs, and local businesses and (b) to apply the innovative methods presented during the previous work-packages to a real-life context.

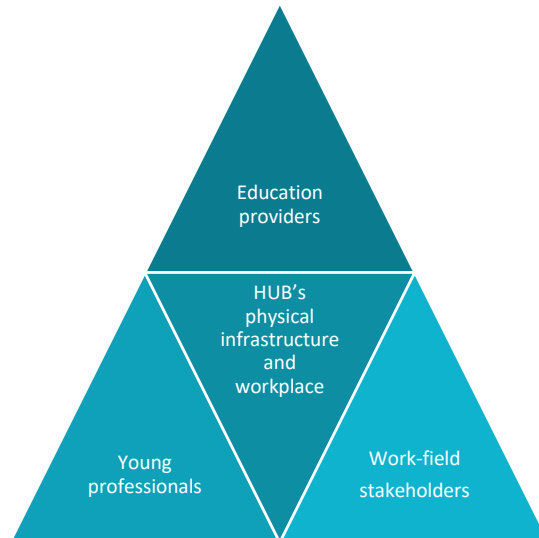


Figure 1. Educational model applied within the university HUBs (StepUP, 2022)

To reach this goal, a case-study challenge was designed where students supervised by faculty went to their local communities and selected and studied specific social enterprises that are challenged in different ways. They were asked to fully study and introduce the enterprise, analyse their business model, target groups, and list the challenges they were facing. They had to afterward visit the enterprise in the format of a range of site visits, including a range of stakeholders, choose and focus on one important challenge, and conduct a thorough internal and external analyse with the goal of offering a concrete idea or solution to that challenge. In the final step, they needed to explain their implementation strategy and its social impact on its variance target groups, including beneficiaries, social enterprise, customers, environment, and the hub that they worked with. Each case challenge was tackled in groups of students and supervisors. All cases were presented to a Jury consisting of three different groups (local assessors, external stakeholders from the social enterprise domain, international experts from the 3 EU partner universities and the peer partners).

The six winning cases provide a diverse picture of possible social enterprises in Myanmar and Thailand. Most cases deal with a social enterprise in food-related products, such as tea, coffee and honey. With similar challenges, such as ensuring that the social enterprise continues to innovate and protects itself against competitors with fair products and sustainable business operations. But expansion and dissemination are also important challenges. Unique is a case from Thailand, which is the only non-food related and concerned with woven handicrafts. The challenge this SE entails is, therefore, a bit different from the others and mainly about community building and enriching the community members with the necessary skills.

It is great to see that working out of the challenges by the various students, supported by their universities, has already been able to achieve so much impact. This is especially visible in the strengthening of the integration in social networks, an increase of awareness, and an increase in understanding of the importance of the SE. In fact, beautifully summarized by MSU, "... has led to huge changes in the point of view on how a SE operation could affect business and living for all partners".

The impact is visible on multiple levels, not only did social enterprises get a push in the right direction, but the benefits have also become visible for students, universities, and communities around the SE.

The following universities have participated in the case challenges. A summary of the cases carried out by the students of these universities follows below.

Partner	Country
Burapha University	Thailand
Prince of Songkla University	Thailand
Payap University	Thailand
Maharakham University	Thailand
National Management Degree College	Myanmar
University of Mandalay	Myanmar

Table 1. Overview of participating universities

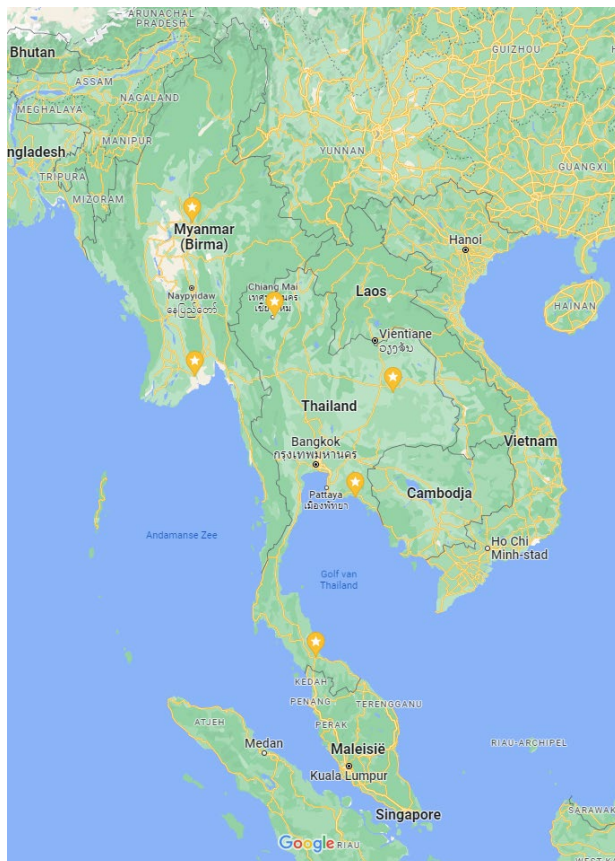


Figure 2. Overview of the location of the participating universities

Approach

The enterprise's challenges were discovered through in-depth interviews and previous research by the university scholars in a scheme of funding projects from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, and Burapha University. From the findings, Sra Si Liam encountered two main business problems: marketing strategies as the products are underpriced and a loss in bargaining power with the customers. Another problem is human resource management which results in low capacity and business sustainability.



BURAPHA UNIVERSITY

SRA SI LIAM COMMUNITY

Sra Si Liam community is located remotely outside of both the industrial and agricultural area of Panatnikom District, Chonburi Province, East of Thailand. This community makes a living by creating woven handicrafts for traditional local lifestyle, e.g. farmers' hats and basketry used in daily life.

MAIN CHALLENGE

To create and produce delicate woven products, specialized skills and labour effort are needed. And skilful residents within the community must be engaged in the activity. Besides the community location, marketing strategy is also relevant and should be considered.

Desired Impact

Particularly, the ideal impacts which will be designed by the university-business settings are marketing approach strategies on adding value to the product price and an increase in the awareness of the local wisdom in woven handicrafts, from which the social enterprise will be the prioritized beneficiary. The implementation started with the brand identity by creating a logo designed from leaves used as the materials. Moreover, the perception and visibility of this community were enhanced by providing training on digitalization, such as online communication through social media and e-marketplace, in order to minimize the impact of the pandemic that negatively resulted in travel restrictions. However, to achieve business sustainability, not only should this omnichannel be considered but also the succession plan, particularly in the human resource aspect.

Actual Impact

From Sra Si Liam case challenge, the results of the implementation could be divided into the following perspectives:

- Social Enterprise – The businesses have realised changes in the disruptive era caused by various factors. To improve, they need to be educated and trained in business management functions and integrate further with internal and external partners. Supportive finance and engagement from the people in the community are especially vital.
- HEI – The output can be taken into account on how the university can create an ecosystem as a hub of Open Education Resources for each level of clientele. The good practice of this intervention could be applied by aligning students to work with an enterprise to find the solutions, from which society can benefit from the students and vice versa.

General Impact

The aims of the STEPup project are aligned with the university's missions of teaching and research advancement, including academic excellence. An expected accomplishment is the required University Social Indicators in accordance with the SDGs framework. As a result, at the local level, the impact is evident in the integration among social enterprise networks. Moreover, the impact the university created with the support from the government and private sectors, such as project funding in R&D, business competitiveness, destination management, and student or people development, can be recognized at the regional and national levels. Under the provision schemes of BCG economy, which is the economic benefit and social impact measured by SROI, these concepts of the ecosystem earlier stated are not offered solely in the East but over the country and internationally.

For more information: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100085137646436>

Approach

Challenges were identified, and implementation strategies were created using information reviews, unstructured interviews, and observation of market staff, beneficiaries, and customers. Analysis tools were SWOT and TOWS matrix. Its identity was identified as 2Cs1E (Communication, Coordination, Engagement). Posters and social media videos were created and used to promote the market. The next plan is to publish an academic paper about the market's role as an incubator in SE ecosystems, ideally resulting in wider dissemination.



PRINCE OF SONGKLA UNIVERSITY

PSU'S FARMER MARKET

PSU's Farmer Market is located at the Faculty of Natural Resources, PSU, Hat Yai City, Songkhla Province, Southern Thailand. The market's main purpose is to offer safe agricultural products and food for the customers, improve market members' quality of life and skills, and serve as a learning centre.

MAIN CHALLENGE

King Rama 9th's Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy is a guideline for operating the market and for helping members to improve their skills and capacities for sustainable self-sufficiency. The challenges are to increase the understanding of the Social Enterprise among stakeholders and to disseminate the market's role in strengthening beneficiaries' capacity.

Desired Impact

Beneficiaries' (market members') knowledge and skills in agricultural production, management, and social responsibility are to be improved and developed by participating in various training. Potential members who integrate the SE concept into their businesses are to be positive examples for the market's network members, i.e. producers, sellers and customers. These potential members are considered influencers in their communities, so they can encourage other community members to participate, thus driving social entrepreneurship. Various social activities organized in collaboration with the Farmer's Market, PSU-SEKH, and government and business sectors can increase awareness and social engagement of the network, involving the market's customers and the local community. Furthermore, to broaden visibility and attract internal and external support for SE, an academic publication showcasing the market's role in the SE ecosystem may be considered.

Actual Impact

The Farmer's Market's manager and staff understand the market's role in the SE context. Their branding of the market shows that it disseminates and showcases how the market enables beneficiaries to acquire and develop knowledge, skills, and attitude, thereby actually helping them to lead healthier lives. Both beneficiaries and customers realized its importance as a social business operation. SE awareness is also increased by getting more people into the social activities organized by the market and PSU-SEKH, such as "Sharing day" and "Save for Safe" projects, including WOM marketing. The good practice of PSU's Farmer Market help to increase interest in and knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship among PSU teaching staff and students and helps foster close collaboration with the private sectors and market network members.

General Impact

The STEPup project helped the Farmer's Market provide useful academic knowledge and services. Experiences obtained during the project are being utilized and applied to other academic/teaching and learning activities at PSU, and in other collaborative programs, according to stakeholders' needs, including workshops, courses, and academic services. Thanks to the project, university-government sector collaboration has been enhanced and strengthened. A PSU-SEKH network was created with the business sector, community and alumni association, generating a long-term impact, and is set to expand, benefiting the university, the community, and the network. Collaboration with stakeholders helps broaden public awareness and understanding of SE and encourages other institutes, associations, and other interested parties to participate in SE activities. Their engagement supports and contributes to local, regional and national social entrepreneurship.

For more information: <https://web.facebook.com/taladkased>

Approach

Akha Ama coffee's challenges were discovered through in-depth interviews with the founder Mister Lee and some of the coffee shop employees. In addition, several field trips were conducted to visit both the coffee shops in Chiang Mai city as well as the Living Factory in Mae Rim Village. The process for designing a solution to the identified challenges included sharing ideas and experiences with StepUP colleagues to gather qualitative data. In addition, the student and their supervisors collected secondary data from previous research, search engines and publication documents.



PAYAP UNIVERSITY

AKHA AMA COFFEE Co., Ltd.

Akha Ama Coffee enables hill-tribe communities to grow, process, and market their coffee sustainably. They have built a coffee brand with world-class quality by creating a network in Thailand and abroad and offering different coffee varieties. The core business is selling coffee beans, high-value fresh fruits and specialized coffees, teas and juices.

MAIN CHALLENGE

The production volume of coffee beans fluctuates every year. In periods of excessive supply, Akha Ama needs to stock more coffee bean. In addition, their cost of capital, which includes interest and expenses associated with interest-bearing liabilities is high. The founders would like to expand their business globally and encourage local communities to plant only organic coffee beans.

Desired Impact

For the local Akha farming community, who are the target beneficiaries of the social enterprise, a sustainable income and better job opportunities because of engagement with Akha Ama, are possible. Akha Ama would gain a competitive advantage in the market by using environmentally sustainable business practices, leading to more customers who prefer goods and services that can create social value. From an environmental impact perspective, the founder of Akha Ama Coffee is keen to implement measures that will conserve natural resources and protect ecosystems by supporting the community's well-being. Lastly, Payap University and SEKH@PYU would benefit from engagement with local social enterprises and through the potential to offer more training programs, short courses, and consulting services to support the skill development of social enterprise practitioners.

Actual Impact

From the perspective of Akha Ama Coffee, the case challenge has resulted in an understanding of the importance of an integrated marketing communications strategy, especially as they now operate a joint-venture coffee shop in Japan. An additional impact has been the recognition of Akha Ama as an example of best practice. From the perspective of the SEKH@Payap University, the case study provided both the MBA student and the faculty members involved with helping her develop the case an opportunity to gain practical experience in applying the knowledge gained throughout the STEPUP project, which they can leverage to offer consulting services to other local social entrepreneurs.

General Impact

The STEPUP project has created an awareness of the impact social enterprises can have on society and has led to an increase in student/faculty engagement with project activities and new project proposals. The SEKH@Payap University has offered several training programs with local stakeholders, as well as working with five academies in Myanmar to embed social entrepreneurship into their community leadership programs. Currently, the SEKH is working with three local social enterprises to assist them in navigating the legal registration for social enterprises in Thailand. Finally, the SEKH is working with the Social Enterprise Office, the government agency responsible for social enterprises in Thailand, to co-create programs and activities related to social enterprise promotion.

For more information: <https://www.akhaamacoffee.com/>

Approach

With the cooperation with the MSU-SEKH hub developed under the Erasmus-STEPup project, all stakeholders have met and discussed in-depth details. Finally, the first electric herb drying machine has been developed and used in the SE using the crowdfunding strategy from the SE, Faculty of Engineering, Mahasarakham University and UIC-centre. The machine achieved optimum cost & power usage while having 4-6 times faster drying herbs, as well as using clean energy and weather-independent drying as desired.



MAHASARAKHAM UNIVERSITY

RAI SOD SAI THAI VAPI HERBS

Rai Sod Sai Thai Vapi Herbs is a local SE in Maha Sarakham City, Thailand, formed by local farmers who have planted and sold high quality organic herbs under the FDA standards such as turmeric and king of bitters, to hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and beauty shops.

MAIN CHALLENGE

The SE would like to have some innovation to dry the herbs with massive volume while retaining high quality products with no contaminations and environmental-friendly operation.

Desired Impact

The co-funded drying machine was successfully developed and installed at the local SE, Rai Sod Sai Thai Vapi Herbs. This intervention directly increased incomes and a better life for the local farmers. They could dry their herbs with a controlled temperature and optimum time that ensured a high-quality process while saving operation time by 4-6 times than the old sunlight drying and, thus, could sell their products at a higher price of 10-20% and higher quantity of 30-40% per day. There were fewer contaminations compared to the old drying method. The developed innovation perfectly supported organic planting with clean energy complying well with the FDA standards. In turn, Mahasarakham University and MSU-SEKH gained new knowledge regarding social engagement, new possible research and practical workplaces for students and staff.

Actual Impact

The intervention among the local SE, stakeholders and MSU-SEKH has led to huge changes in points of view on how SE operation could affect business and living for all involved partners. The first drying innovation from crowdfunding provided benefits for all the stakeholders and partners. It, therefore, led to other innovations for enhancing their business while saving a clean environment and better living. Other businesses developing topics have been developed by the local farmers through the SE and finally through the MSU-SEKH, e.g. 'How to develop and sell dried herb products to European via the connection of Erasmus-StepUP project?', 'What else could the herbs be used for besides medicine?' and 'More research on other local herbs in-depth in a scientific perspective?'. This ensures the sustainability of the MSU-SEKH at Mahasarakham University for future operations.

General Impact

The Erasmus-StepUP project has caused huge impacts on the local SE, university staff and students and MSU-SEKH. The activities conducted under the project, such as the case challenge, provided great examples for every step of SE development: beginning, implementing and finalising. Many ideas and collaboration projects have been planned by the local SE, while SU-SEKH has realised that more researchers and experts from Mahasarakham University must be contacted and become part of the hub to serve a variety of service demands. The local government agencies could be aware of the benefits of partnership operations with the university via MSU-SEKH and the local SE from the operation as a triple helix operation.

For more information: <https://soamaps.com/country/TH/651626/>

Approach

In order to increase sales, the processes of Market Analysis, Product adjustments, and Marketing & Branding have been conducted. Next, potential customers were interviewed (30 people under 35 years old and another 30 people over 35 years old) to seek for the root cause of problems. Only 23% of people under 35 years old are interested in the product, while almost 85% of people over 35 years old are interested in honey. Based on the survey, the suggestion was made to do product adjustments such as printing out the label in the Burmese language, mentioning Keywords such as “Honey” or “Local Made” in a more stand-out style, and adding honey dipping sticks attached. Key changes in marketing are also advised, such as partnering with chain pharmacies and supplement retailers as a new sales channel; building a strong, trustworthy image on Facebook page; catching up with up-to-date trends with regular evaluation and check up on channel sales and customer feedback.



NATIONAL MANAGEMENT DEGREE COLLEGE

PLAN BEE

Plan Bee, a well-known social enterprise, helping over 1000 people for their living, is a honey manufacturer and distributor as well as exporter. Plan Bee is leveraging the unique bee-keeping potential in Myanmar to empower and improve livelihoods, nutrition and food security for thousands of vulnerable people, in particular women and landless households in Myanmar's Southern Shan region.

MAIN CHALLENGE

Although Plan Bee is recognized as a high-end, organic and pure honey retailer, they do not gain as much market share as it should in the local market. Many people are entering the honey business with under-price to be more competitive. Some of the fake dealers try to enter the market with artificial honey with underpriced and monthly discounts. This causes a decrease in the market price of honey; on the other hand, people believe less in the product.

Desired Impact

The desired impact on beneficiaries is to empower and improve their livelihoods. As for the social enterprise, the social impact is to gain more market share and be more sustainable. The impact for the customers is to be able to access more safe and healthy honey at a lot more reasonable price as well as gain more knowledge on honey storage. As for the hub/university, the impact is to be aware of social enterprise problems and polish theories and students' soft skills. For the environment, the impact will be a lot safer and environmentally friendly businesses and to be more sustainable.

Actual Impact

Plan Bee social enterprise notices a different solution that they might not be thinking about before. They are trying to sharpen their strengths and grab well of the opportunities in front of them based on the findings of the SWOT analysis. Not only Plan Bee but also similar enterprises can be aware of the distinct idea and adopt the solutions to their context. The hub/university is aware of social enterprise problems and starts to polish theories and students' soft skills and begin contributing to the well-being of the local community. The hub/university is attempting to provide knowledge and skills learnt in the STEPup training to more SEs and to inspire students to be interested in and become social entrepreneurs.

General Impact

The STEPup project helps to build a bridge between the youths who has a lot of unique idea and enough business studies with professionals who are willing to create a great impact on society in their skilled business field. There are many vocational trainings held at NMDC, transferring knowledge and materials learnt from STEPup training to SEs and students so as to better solve problems and improve their activities. More close relationships and open discussions between the university and businesses are achieved at the case challenge event. Students are able to understand much more about Social Enterprises and their problems, as well as gain a chance to practice business knowledge and ideas.

For more information: <https://www.my-planbee.com/>

Approach

The enterprise needs to extend R&D and innovation into areas such as recyclable, re-engineered product life cycles, and new products that meet customers' (or industries') demands "green as the new normal." The government can create policy frameworks amenable to smooth supply opportunities. To protect itself from substitute products, the business should protect its intellectual asset, maintain its price advantages, and make it harder for other businesses to compete in their market and be better than their competitors.



UNIVERSITY OF MANDALAY

SHAN SHWE TAUNG TEA LEAF

Shan Shwe Taung Myanmar Tea leaf Co., Ltd is located in Mandalay, Myanmar. It is the first Myanmar Organic Fermented Tea (Laphet). Tea Leaf Co., Ltd creates 183 organic tea farmers and 292 acres of tea plantations across four villages in the southern Shan State. In collaboration with local farmers, they have also established organic tea factories in Myazedi and Allal chaung villages, Ywarngan Township. They collaborate with 23 sesame farmers to produce raw organic sesame seeds for their sesame-based wet tea. They continued to drive their dedication to 100% organic products and aim to obtain certifications such as EU, USDA and JAS. Due to rising demand, they are also building a new factory near Mandalay International Airport in Tada-U Township.

MAIN CHALLENGE

Shan Shwe Taung Myanmar Tea leaf is facing:

- (1) Business challenges: production management, technological challenges including auto machines and operation management.
- (2) Organizational challenges: Human resource development, organization design and development and change management.
- (3) Market challenges: product management expanding new recipes and consumer

Desired Impact

As the desired impact, Shan Shwe Taung Co., Ltd want to promote export commodity and thereby increase the livelihood of farmers. The enterprise would like to provide technology to local farmers for the production of 100% organic tea leaves. The business started foreign involvement in the value-added tea leaf production can positively impact the tea industries and lead to growth in the industrial output.

Actual Impact

The results of the implementation are as follows:

Impacts on the beneficiaries: (1) donate 2% of revenues to organic farmers, (2) able to achieve the USA and EU organic certificates for 252 farmers and 306 farms, (3) able to provide electricity to the village, (4) able to establish organic tea leaf training centre for organic farmers and (5) able to arrange the health awareness program in southern Shan State.

Impact on the Social Enterprise. A cultural change from the traditional style to the organic firm has been achieved by coordinating and collaborating with farmers. Furthermore, the enterprise can contribute organic training and technique to farmers. There are mutual benefits between the farmers and the enterprise; through the coordination of the two groups can reach the pioneer of Myanmar's entrepreneur Era in the Tea industry.

Impact on the customers. Customers can get opportunities for the fair price and quality of the products. And the products from the Shan Shwe Taung tea leaf industry are recognized by Myanmar's food and drug administration. They have received the recognition of the international hazard analysis and critical control points certificate.

Impact on the environment. Tea leaf business conserves biodiversity management. Due to tea leaves being an organic matter, they can improve the structure of the soil, increasing soil drainage and helping with healthy aeration for plant roots.

Impact on the SEKH @UM. The university can create opportunities for the knowledge-sharing centre among the stakeholders. Social entrepreneurs from the Mandalay region can learn the good practice of the SE and enhance can apply their awareness in their practice fields.

General Impact

Through the events concerning the case challenges and vocational training, which can access in the University of Mandalay Knowledge Hub Centre, stakeholders can get the SE practices. Students can find the best way how to solve the challenges of SE through local research. Because the vocation training is held at the University of Mandalay, social entrepreneurs, students, administrators, some government staff and academicians have a chance to learn about SE and share knowledge about marketing strategy, business plans, marketing plan and business models. Based on the knowledge from the training, Shan Shwe Taung Tea leaf Co., Ltd maintains a fair price and distributes it to their customers without changing the price, although the cost is rising in the current situation (Covid-19 and the Political crisis in Myanmar). The Ministry of Education permitted to open the vocational training in the MU Hub centre and encouraged to continue the extent of the training concerning the SE.

For more information: <https://www.myanmartealeaf.com/>

Implications and Lessons learned

Looking back at the case challenge process and all activities conducted at both the Thai, as well as at Burmese higher educational institutions, one can state that the generated impact and the lessons learned can serve as the utmost valuable experience for the Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge HUBs' successful functioning and operation.

First of all, when taking into consideration, the students who took part in the 36 case challenges, here some of the general outcomes have been summarized (both stated in the evaluation report as well as expressed in the final reflection process together with the university supervisors and the social enterprise representatives):

- The students managed to reach a better understanding of some of the local social enterprises, their visions, objectives, value propositions, services, and stakeholders.
- The students learned how to best identify various target groups of local SEs.
- The students managed to create a bonding with local SEs, and identify a range of challenges faced by those SEs.
- The students succeeded in analysing thoroughly the diverse challenges, from a micro, meso, and macro perspective.
- The students investigated and elaborated upon best practices in the region related to the identified challenges.
- The students applied in practice diverse techniques for interviewing and consulting the local experts.
- The students applied in practice how to provide solutions to chosen challenges and offer their deliverables in the format of marketing plans, product development plans, interventions, etc.
- The students had the opportunity to reflect on the whole process, including the impact on the beneficiaries, the environment, and the HUBs involved.

When it comes to the **social enterprises** involved (both in Thailand as well as in Myanmar):

- They received exposure on regional, national and international levels.
- They were provided with the opportunity a challenge of theirs to be tackled by academia, young professionals (the students), EU experts, as well as SE peers.
- They received a very good understanding of what the SEKHUBs' function was and how in the future, they could collaborate.
- Their business grew further, and innovative solutions were provided for fostering and sustaining the value they were generating.
- They took part in an international project where communities of practice were formed.
- They got to know experts in the SE field whom to continue the collaboration with.

One should not forget the value generated for the lecturers and the staff of the Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge HUBs:

- They showcased the mission and objectives of the HUBs created.
- They tested and approved in practice one of the key activities of the HUBs – supporting and sustaining the SE businesses through collaboration among academia, students and the industry.
- They received regional, national and international exposure.
- They collaborated with international experts.
- They became part of the newly formed communities of practice.
- They experimented with in total of 36 case challenges where the expertise could be acknowledged and verified in practice.
- They achieved a new level of collaboration with both their students as well as their peers from other national and international universities.

The impact that the case-study challenge process generated in general can be synthesized in the following three-tiered approach presented below:

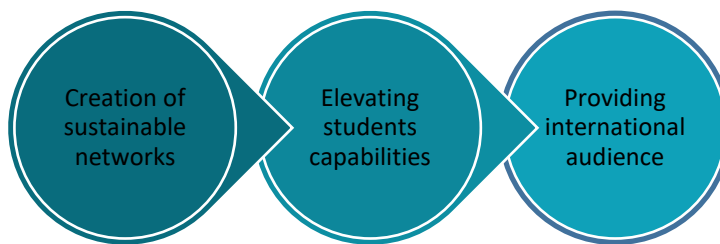


Figure 3. Three-tiered approach – the Case-study challenge synergy impact (STEPup, 2022)

It has now become standard practice to form learning communities through the established SEKHs where students, business partners, educators, and researchers collaborate to address real-world issues facing business and society.

Consequently, integrating education, research, and impact in settings that are both global and intercultural (see Figure 3).

Reflection

Over the course of the past two years, the world went through a global pandemic. This resulted in the necessity of almost complete digitization and reframing of the entire project proposal, which became a turning point and even beneficial to the initial plan in certain ways. Another limitation was also the political unrest in Myanmar and thus students being deprived of taking part in the usual flow of educational services and attendance. Despite these limitations, this project and in specific the case challenge practice was a success on many fronts.

The STEPup project's goal has been to lay the groundwork for social entrepreneurship to become naturally ingrained in the educational practices of HEIs in Thailand and Myanmar as well as in how the students and lecturers themselves view this as THE pathway to follow. This goal has been realized.

Since skilled personnel is already available, physical structures have been put in place, and instructional models and pilot programs have already been tried, it is safe to say that not only the first step but also the institutional and industry logic have been successfully entwined (Terzieva, Mahajan & Schulte, 2022).

The sustainability of such project endeavours and the educational models and practices are most of the time missed. In this project, there were elements that led to sustainable impact, including Open Educational Resources; operational Knowledge HUBs; intercultural competence development of staff, experts, students, and social enterprises during case-study challenges; spin-offs in terms of publications, visibility, and cross-project, cross-disciplinary, cross-university and Euro-Asian collaborations. The STEPup project functioned as an active experimentation and innovation-driven arena where the higher education and the social enterprise industry intertwined with the catalysts being the students and the lecturers themselves.

Teams

Burapha University

- 1) Social Enterprise: Sra Si Liam community
 - Miss Somporn Muenyuttha, the leader, and two peers.
- 2) HEI: Burapha University Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub as follows:
 - Miss Supitcha Imnopparat, a student from Burapha University International College
 - Mr. Vorrapop Vivatvanit, a researcher from Burapha University International College
 - Dr. Salil Chanroj, a researcher from Faculty of Sciences, Burapha University
 - Dr. Panadda Chanphet, a researcher from Faculty of Management and Tourism

Prince of Songkla University

- 1) PSU's Farmer Market
 - Mrs. Worapat Phaikaew, market manager
 - Miss Keminee Tongma, market staff
- (2) HEI: PSU Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub as follows:
 - Miss Manatsawee Saetaew, a student from Faculty of Natural Resources
 - Dr. Rungrat Saeyang, a researcher from Faculty of Natural Resources
 - Miss Partiitya Saejew, a staff from Faculty of Natural Resources

Payap University

- 1) Social Enterprise: Akha Ama Coffee
 - Mr. Lee Ayu Chuepa
- 2) HEI: Students and faculty members from Payap University:

Miss Pinyapat Sangpin was the lead student on the MBA program for the case. The advisers from the Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub included Dr. Vanlapa Wongchan, the main supervisor, and researcher, Mr. Thosaphon Bunsiri, the supervisor, and Miss. Rattikan Kuntapoung, the supervisor, and researcher of SE Case Challenge project. Also assisting the team were Mr. Michael Meallem, the National coordinator of STEPup and Mr. Waruth Kaosul, the coordinator of SEKH at Payap University.

Maharakham University

- 1) Social Enterprise: SE Rai Sod Sai Thai Vapi Herbs
 - All members
- 2) HEI: Maharakham University:

Mr. Nattaphol Nasathit as a lead student from the faculty of Engineering, Maharakham University (MSU), under the supervision of Dr. Nuchara C. Thongsan from the International Business program. Mr. Amnat Seanthawesuk, Mr. Santipab Thurarat, and Miss Sarida Butkhot as the project assistants. The project coordinator was Miss Chompuphan Samappito and the supporting researchers from the MSU-SEKH hub included, Dr. Chonlatee Photong, Dr. Sarinya Sala-ngam, Dr. Piyapat Panmuang, Miss Piyanuch Sittachun and Miss Ratchaneekorn Khamchumphu.

National Management Degree College

- 1) Social Enterprise: Plan Bee
 - The Plan Bee team
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- 2) HEI: National Management Degree College: supervisor and teachers from NMDC, especially Dr. San San Myint and Tr. Htay Htay patiently left their busy time for reviewing my ideas for case challenge and give much suggestion.

University of Mandalay

- 1) Social enterprise: Shan Shwe Taung Myanmar Tea Leaf Co., Ltd.
 - Mis Moh Moh Theint (Leader)
 - U Chit Min Khant (HR Manager).
- 2) Social Enterprise Knowledge Hub University of Mandalay (SEKH @ UM)
 - Dr. Marlar Than, a supervisor from the University of Mandalay.
 - Dr. Ni Ni Win, a researcher from Faculty of Science, UM.
 - Than Than Soe, a researcher from Faculty of Economics, UM hub
 - Ngu Whar Whar Kyaw, a researcher from Faculty of Management, UM
 - Khin Soe Wai, a researcher from Faculty of Statistics, UM

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