

ASSIST *Now*



3 SOURCE OF LIFE: IMPROVING WATER SAFETY IN AURORA, PHILIPPINES



**ELEVATING
SKILLS THROUGH
KONE ACADEMY**

8 & 9

**LIGHTING UP THE LIVES
OF 500 FAMILIES
AND MORE**

12

**A-TEAM:
KNOW MORE ABOUT
THE MEMBERS OF ASSIST**

14

ABOUT ASSIST

Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Development (ASSIST) was established in 2003 with the aim of addressing sustainability challenges in the Philippines.

Today, it has evolved into a self-sustaining, Pan-Asian, non-profit organization driven by passion and purpose for progress and prosperity in the region.



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photo by Bryan Herrera Tagaduar, TPSW 2013

WORKING TOWARDS THE SDGs

As part of the global development community, ASSIST ensures to align its initiatives towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To demonstrate how our work is aligned with the SDGs, stories in this newsletter end with the icons of the SDGs that they contribute to.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SOURCE OF LIFE: IMPROVING WATER SAFETY IN AURORA, PHILIPPINES



ASSIST has distributed water filters to a total of 1,700 households in local communities in the disaster-prone province of Aurora, Philippines, under the Supply Of Unpolluted clean drinking water to Rural Communities (SOURCE) project.

SOURCE Philippines aims to improve water safety through LifeStraw water filters, a product of Swiss company, Vestergaard, to rural communities and reduce waterborne disease, such as diarrhea, typhoid, and cholera. It is funded by DEG, a member of KfW Bankengruppe.

The province of Aurora is the target of the project because of the regular floods and storms that hit the area, which makes it difficult for communities to have constant access to clean water.

Advocates training

ASSIST also conducts awareness sessions on the importance of water sanitization as part of the project.

Some 1,300 locals have already attended these sessions, and 211 advocates have been trained to promote the importance of water safety and to help with any issues concerning the water filters.

The project management team visited the barangays of Dibut, Dibayabay, Dikapinisan, Dimanayat, Bacong, San Isidro, and Diteki

in San Luis. Municipal Mayor Mariano Tangson joined the distribution.

The team will return to the sites next month for the first monitoring and evaluation of the project.

Furthermore, water samples will be tested for the effectiveness of the filters on selected sites.

Next steps

Succeeding distribution and awareness sessions will happen in the municipalities of Baler, and Dingalan.

“The strong will of the local government helped us greatly”, Project Manager Janina Astilla pointed out.

“It is what made it possible for us to reach to the farthest communities and continue to do so.”



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”

Janina Astilla
Project Manager, SOURCE Philippines



ACCESSING ENERGY THROUGH **accessRE**

Representatives from ASSIST, University of Makati, and SolarNRG gathered to celebrate the opening of the new accessRE training center on 7 June at the University of Makati. It will be the site of the Rooftop Solar PV System Designers and Installers training program.

IN PHOTO: (Left to Right) Mike Consenheim (SolarNRG), Pf. Apollo Mambiar and Cynthia Jose (UMak), Karthikeyan Subburaman (ASSIST), Riza Verano (ASSIST)

AccessRE is a private sector partnership (PSP) project between DEG, SolarNRG Philippines and ASSIST that aims to tackle the energy needs of the country through solar energy adoption, specifically targeting the untapped segment of small buildings and upscaling electricians into green technicians.

The first session of the Training

of Teachers (ToT) took place after the opening ceremony of the training center. Mike Consenheim, Country Manager of SolarNRG, and some engineers shared their expertise in solar energy and electricity. Students and faculty of the University of Makati attended the session.

The training intends to improve the skills of 100 electricians and students, and enable them to become green technicians, or solar technicians. It serves

as a sustainability measure to ensure that there is a ready pool of solar panel designers and installers to cater to potential clients of solar panel suppliers, like SolarNRG.

Alexa Tamondong, Project Associate of ASSIST, emphasized the importance of the project, commenting "It's crucial to have a skilled, efficient local workforce that can cater to industry needs." She continued, "It is also important to note the relevance of the solar technician

training program beyond the project, given our transition into a skills-based economy and the need for innovation and continuous professional development in a very fast-moving and competitive environment."



“It is also important to note the relevance of the solar technician training program beyond the project, given our transition into a skills-based economy and the need for innovation and continuous professional development in a very fast-moving and competitive environment.”

Alexa Tamondong
Project Associate, accessRE

HIGH-IMPACT DISCUSSIONS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE INNOVATION



ASSIST and its flagship program, DigiBayanihan (DB), with its partners De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) and Hub of Innovation for Inclusion (HiFi), successfully organized the first Innovation for Inclusive Impact Forum (In_Pact) 2018 last 13 April at the De La Salle University (DLSU) in Manila, Philippines.

IN PHOTO: (Left to Right) Diane Eustaquio (IdeaSpace Foundation), Glenn Estrella (Globe Telecom), Jay Fajardo (Launchgarage), Usec. Monchito Ibrahim (Department of Information and Communications Technology Philippines)

“In_Pact Asia was meant to be the event that flicks the proverbial first domino. Through it, we hope to cause a chain reaction that will ignite cross-sector collaboration towards impactful social innovation.”

Franz Gabriel Raña
Senior Associate for Events & Partnerships, ASSIST

In his welcome remarks, DLSU President Br. Dennis Magbanua FSC, highlighted the importance of sharing ideas and social innovation across the country. “The ‘In’ pertains to Innovation and Inclusion and ‘Pact’ means agreement. The two words are combined to form ‘In_Pact, a resemblance of impact,” he said.

is an important factor in creating impact. They should raise their voices to be heard. This shall create an impactful action – a starter to drive change and innovation,” he stressed. The participants expressed their satisfaction on how they were able to connect with people across diverse sectors and share the stimulus. Many emphasized that action must follow.



The Forum became a venue for sharing of ideas and discussions to propel social innovation across the Philippines and beyond through digital enablement and creative thinking.

“In_Pact Asia was meant to be the event that flicks the proverbial first domino. Through it, we hope to cause a chain reaction that will ignite cross-sector collaboration towards impactful social innovation,” Events Manager, Franz Rana.



Over 30 global thought leaders and speakers led the discussions on new strategies and emergent ideas. ASSIST Managing Director stressed the important of youth participation in digital enablement and creative thinking. “Youth is an important factor in creating impact. They should raise their voices to be heard. This shall create an impactful action – a starter to drive change and innovation,” he stressed.

He continued, “Impact cannot happen overnight; and so we look forward to having more active participation at In_Pact Asia Forum in the years to come.”

ASSIST Managing Director stressed the important of youth participation in digital enablement and creative thinking. “Youth



WHAT IS DIGIBAYANIHAN?

DigiBayanihan is an innovative digital empowerment movement spearheaded by ASSIST and supported by a multi-stakeholder partnership that aims to provide digital literacy, digitally-enabled literacy and digital citizenship to all Filipinos.



EMPOWER Filipinos by teaching them the skills they need to use digital technology to improve their lives



ACCELERATE the country's economic growth by giving all citizens open access to use, create, and capitalize on digital tools.



ENABLE Filipinos to become digitally competent so they can spearhead the nation's development.

DIGIBAYANIHAN HIGHLIGHTS FOR THIS QUARTER

4TH LOOKOUT BOOTCAMP



DigiBayanihan, a flagship program of ASSIST to bring digital literacy to the Philippines, participated in the 4th Lookout Bootcamp, organized by Out of the Box, on 25 May. The camp is an annual event that aims to educate Filipinos on media and film literacy, and other forms of communications. ASSIST held a workshop on digital citizenship and cyberbullying to an audience of high school teachers from public and private schools at the Lookout Bootcamp.

12th WYAAP SUMMER CAMP



DigiBayanihan held a workshop on the responsible use of social media and social media marketing at the 12th World Youth Alliance Asia Pacific (WYAAP) Summer Camp in Antique, Philippines on 30 May. The camp is an educational training program for the youth to expand their knowledge about human dignity and the role of youth in development, to experience cultural exchange, and to strengthen leadership skills through the WYA certified training program.



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INTERACTIVE NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2018



LINKING PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES THROUGH

CSO PLASA



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) successfully held its 51st Annual Meeting at its headquarters in Manila on 2 to 5 May. The theme of the event is “Linking People and Economies for Inclusive Development.”

IN PHOTO: (Left to Right) Sreeni Narayanan (ASSIST Asia), Vinay Bhargava (Partnership for Transparency Fund), Emeline Siale Ilolahia (PIANGO), Abdelrahman Mohamed (AIESEC International), Marlene Ramirez (AsiaDHRRRA), Hemantha Withanage (Centre for Environmental Justice), and Devon Ronald Dublin (Conservation International)

ADB, in partnership with ASSIST, organized and moderated a consultation workshop about ADB’s new long term strategy, called Strategy 2030 (S2030) which aims to respond to the changes brought about by a rapidly evolving Asia and the Pacific. Over 130 local and international civil society organizations (CSOs) leaders from ADB’s member countries attended.

ADB Vice President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development Bambang Susantono

opened the event, highlighting the importance of CSO actions in development. “ADB would like to learn from CSOs’ rich experience in promoting inclusiveness as [they] build on principles that place people – particularly the poor and marginalized – at the center of the development process,” he said.

ASSIST also collaborated with ADB in managing the CSO Plasa. Inspired by the concept of the “plasa” as a public square where citizens gather to socialize and be entertained, the CSO Plasa became a venue for stakeholders in the development sector to

share and exchange ideas, and discuss.

Throughout the week, panel discussions on topics relevant to the sector were conducted, highlighting the role of CSOs in ensuring inclusive development. Interspersed between these are short presentations of select CSOs and non-government organizations (NGOs) on their various initiatives that lead toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



“ADB would like to learn from CSOs’ rich experience in promoting inclusiveness as [they] build on principles that place people – particularly the poor and marginalized – at the center of the development process.”

Bambang Susantono
VP for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, ADB



IN PHOTO: (Left to Right) Hemantha Withanage (Centre for Environmental Justice), Stephen P. Groff (ADB), Manana Kochladze (CEE Bankwatch), Hasan Mehed (CLEAN), Norly Grace Mercado (Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center), Annabel Perreras (NGO Forum on ADB)



IN PHOTO: (Left to Right) Sreenivas Narayanan (ASSIST), Dang Minh Su (Department of Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs), Pham Huu Loc (LTTC), Le Hong Son (Department of Education), Axel Berkling (KONE), Nguyen Van Vu (KONE), H.E. Kari Kahiluoto (Finland Embassy), Aru David (ASSIST)

ELEVATING SKILLS THROUGH KONE ACADEMY



IN PHOTO: H.E. Ambassador Kari Kahiluoto (Embassy of Finland in Hanoi, Vietnam)



IN PHOTO: Le Hong Son (Director of Department of Education, Vietnam)

HO CHI MINH, Vietnam – KONE Academy, the training ground for the project “Promote Technical Education Reform of Mechanics and Electrification to Professionals” (PROMPT), was opened last June 29.





The construction industry in Vietnam is booming and as more high-rise buildings begin construction, the demand for elevators and escalators also increases. The demand for skilled labor is evident and urgent. However, Vietnam elevator companies, due to lack of supply in the workforce, are outsourcing services, such as installations, testing, and commissioning, which also face quality problems.

of ASSIST, Aru David, Country Head of ASSIST Vietnam, and Pham Huu Loc, Rector of LTTC.

Scholarships in mechanics were awarded at the opening ceremony. Axel Berkling said "I am sure the collaboration will help in improving skills, both theoretical and practical. The certificate of vocation that they receive from the academy will also help in creating new career opportunities."

For the rest of the year, the academy will hold trainings for the first batch of students who are also recipients of the Honor scholarships. They will complete their trainings in 2019 and an evaluation and modification process will be conducted to monitor the effectivity of the training programs before the second batch of students starts their training.

KONE is a global leader in elevator and escalator industry. KONE, with funding support from KfW DEG, partnered with ASSIST Vietnam to address the risks of malfunctions and safety hazards in elevators and escalators construction industry. Project PROMPT and its local partner, Ly Tu Trong College (LTTC), will conduct trainings to create a strong skilled labor workforce in Vietnam.

The opening ceremony of KONE Academy was held last June 29. Present during the event were H.E. Kari Kahiluoto Ambassador of the Embassy of Finland, Axel Berkling, Executive Vice President of Kone Asia Pacific, Nguyen Van Vu, General Director of Kone Vietnam, Sreenivas Narayanan, Managing Director



IN PHOTO: Nguyen Van Vu (Managing Director of KONE Vietnam)



IN PHOTO: Axel Berkling (Executive VP for APAC region of KONE)





CACAO PRO: INCREASING CACAO PRODUCTION IN MINDANAO

ASSIST, in partnership with YARA, officially launched Cacao Productivity and Profitability (Cacao PRO) last 10 May to kick off a two-year project aimed at increasing productivity and efficiency of cacao farms in Mindanao.

IN PHOTO: [Left] Dario A. Divino (Department of Agriculture Region XI) is presented a certificate of appreciation by [right] Joseph Arnel Go (ASSIST) with [center] Nicholas Gan (Yara Fertilizers Philippines) present.

Cacao PRO targets Davao City, Davao del Norte, Compostela Valley, and Agusan del Sur, where cacao productivity is yet to meet its full potential. Present in the project launch were Dario Divino from Department of Agriculture Region XI, Joseph Arnel Go, ASSIST Group Chief Operating Officer (COO), and Nicholas Gan, YARA Country Manager.

Pilot farms are in the initial stages of establishment. Four model farms will demonstrate YARA's Crop Nutrition Project, and the results will be promoted and shared to encourage better practice in other areas. Twenty five cacao specialists will also be trained. These specialists

will in turn train 50 farmers on cacao management and good agricultural practices.

"We are optimistic that this program will help address the common problems of our local cacao industry," Joseph Arnel Go, Group COO of ASSIST said. "Right now, there's an increasing demand of cacao globally and we believe that the Philippines will play a significant role in terms of cacao production and exportation."



IN PHOTO: Riza Verano, ASSIST Project Management Head, explains CacaoPro to the beneficiaries.

ENSURING FOOD SAFETY THROUGH SAFE PEPPER

BINH PHUOC, Vietnam – The pepper industry in Vietnam has difficulty in keeping up with the increasing demand for production. To address this issue, the “Sustainable Agricultural and Food Safety Excellence for Pepper in Vietnam” (SAFE PEPPER) project was launched.



ASSIST partnered with DEG, Eurofins, Nedspice, and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Binh Phuoc province for the SAFE PEPPER project. Stakeholder meetings and Trainings of Teachers (ToT) were held simultaneously in recent months.

Fifteen experienced farmers were selected from cooperatives within the province to undergo ToT. Eight pepper cooperatives, with about 250 farmers in total, were selected. Nedspice, a private company that processes spices, conducted the trainings. A total of 500 beneficiaries will be supported through the project.

Workshops on international standards, food safety regulations, impact of fertilizers and pesticides on health of farmers

are scheduled to take place in the following months. “We are blessed with the support from the local communities,” commented Vo Phan Kim Ngan, project manager of ASSIST Vietnam. “With our efforts on track, we hope to have no problem in fulfilling our goal of building capacity for the farmers and increase quality and quantity of pepper production.



HOW TO ACHIEVE SMARTER, GREENER SUGARCANE FARMING?

MAHARASHTRA, India - ASSIST and Same Deutz-Fahr (SDF), leading manufacturer of agricultural machineries, trained farmers in the Indian State of Maharashtra on Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI), a more productive and profitable way of farming.

About 1200 to 1600 mm of water is needed every year for sugarcane cultivation, but farmers are currently using 3000 to 4000 mm yearly. Farmers are also planting sugarcane between 1.5 and 2.5 feet apart instead of the recommended 4 feet, resulting in decreased sun exposure and reduced air flow to the roots. These methods are inefficient and may result in poor yield but farmers continue such practices due to lack of technical know-how, ignorance or simply adhering to age-old practices without analysing ways to improve and innovate.

concept, and the role of mechanization in sugarcane cultivation and its advantages.

ASSIST Project Head, Mr Karan, along with the SDF team led the two-day workshop. Guest speakers educated farmers on the pilot farms which will serve as a model for sustainable sugarcane cultivation practices. The workshop was part of the SMART Technologies for GREEN Agricultural Practices (SMART 4 GREEN) project.

contributed by
Nandhini Shanmugham
Manager, Partnerships & Network Management - India

SSI is an innovative method of sugarcane farming that promotes the use of less seeds, less water and optimum utilization of fertilizers and land to achieve more yields. ASSIST conducted a two-day sensitization workshop for around 85 farmers from Pune and Ahmednagar on SSI



LIGHTING UP THE LIVES OF 500 FAMILIES AND MORE



KAMPONG THOM, Cambodia – The Energy Efficiency Initiative (EEI), a solar project of ASSIST with Philips Lighting company, successfully completed implementation after two fruitful years.

Through EEI, ASSIST and Philips worked to reduce the risks of fire, health, and financial problems caused by Kerosene lamps commonly used in rural Cambodia by distributing solar lighting systems to rural families, conducting awareness sessions, and installing solar street lights.

The project reached more than 500 households from Chamnar Krom Commune, Nipich Commune, and Dornng Kambet Commune of Kampong Thom province. Two trainings were held for each Communes, including Project Ambassador trainings.

Participants from Philips, ASSIST, local authorities, local NGOs, project ambassadors, and beneficiaries joined to share the project's final outcomes and encourage sustainable use and maintenance of the solar products in the project closing ceremony.

To ensure the sustainability of the project, Holywin Hul, project manager of ASSIST, said

“we shall continue to look out so all our work will benefit the future.” She further evaluated that she is “We have gained huge satisfaction from all the project stakeholders. This gives us the strength to carry on with our work to increase the quality of life of the rural communities of Cambodia.”

“We have gained huge satisfaction from all the project stakeholders. This gives us the strength to carry on with our work to increase the quality of life of the rural communities of Cambodia.”

Holywin Hul
Project Manager, EEI





PROMOTING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE RICE FARMERS

CAN THO CITY, Vietnam – ASSIST partnered with SGS Vietnam, a leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company, to strengthen and improve rice farmers’ competitiveness in the Mekong delta region by applying an innovative farmer cooperative model and adopting food safety standards according to Global GAP, a benchmark for farm management practices.

Vietnam has more than 10,000 agricultural cooperatives (AC). The internal capacities of the majority of these ACs are known to lack management skills, such as financing, facilities, technology, and operation skills.

The project will select groups from the Can Tho-Hau Giang and Dong Thap province. Forty cooperative advisors will be trained from each province, to raise awareness on Global GAP standards, and to provide support to the consultants such as conducting trainings.

The project will continue to train 30 Global GAP internal

auditors, 3 global auditors, and 1,000 farmers from five selected agricultural cooperatives on Global GAP and SGS’ traceability platform.

An opening ceremony for the project was held at the People’s Committee of Thoi Lai Ward, Can Tho City on May 25. Mr. Vu Duc Thang, Deputy General Director of SGS, Mr. Aru David, Regional Director of ASSIST, and Mr. Vo Duc Gia, Consultant of ASSIST spoke to the participating farmers on the goals of the training.



GREEN ELECTRIAN: THE STUDENT BECOMES THE TEACHER

HO CHI MINH, Vietnam – ASSIST Vietnam completed its training of teachers (ToT) on installing and commissioning of photovoltaic systems (PV) designed to supply usable solar power. The trainees were selected students of Ly Tu Trong College (LTTC) and its partner colleges.

The training, which was held 11-23 June at the Ly Tu Trong College of Ho Chi Minh City, was organized by LILAMAM 2 College and GIZ, a German agency that specializes on

development aid. The training is part of the project ‘Green Electrician’ which aims to encourage the utilization of sustainable energy in Vietnam. The project was funded by DEG and the Schneider Foundation and implemented by ASSIST Vietnam.



Michael Stark from GIZ led the training. The students were taught subjects such as solar energy overview, work safety, assembling PV-generator/cabinet/generator frame through lectures, instructions, and on the job training methods.

the project, saying that “the trainings are great, and I look forward to achieving our goal of teaching 100 trainees. [I believe that we] will make a sustainable impact on the solar PV industry here in Vietnam.”

Eighteen students who completed the training will become trainers for solar PV systems. The initial goal was to train 100 students on sustainable energy and solar power. ASSIST Vietnam Project associate Le Thi Kim Loan expressed her good hopes for





SHARING OF DEVELOPMENT SECTOR INSIGHTS THROUGH AIM PARTNERSHIP

ASSIST partnered with the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) for the school's new program, 'Managerial Immersion (MI)' which aims to immerse students in the organizational aspects of development management through internships.

The interns will produce a research report at the end of their 4-week internship program. Two students of AIM, Tia P. Sutresna, and Kitchie M. Hermoso were introduced to ASSIST as part of the pilot internship program.

Tia, with her experience in managing an NGO, the Bulir Padi Foundation, worked on developing marketing strategies

for AsianNGO, ASSIST's social enterprise. While Kitchie, who has a background in communications, worked on monitoring and visibility strategies for Master of Disaster (MOD), a board game on disaster preparedness. She also did a research on marketing strategy for potential partners with ASSIST's Creative Lab.

The interns gained insights into the organizational internal dynamics and operations. Tia said, "Through the program, I gained experience on the operations of a successful nonprofit organization."



HONG KONG INTERNS DEVISE MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR TEST HERO

Interns from Hong Kong University (HKU) joined ASSIST to provide marketing support on TEST HERO, an initiative of DigiBayanihan. The internship program, HKU - Common Purpose Leadership Development Programme, was organized by Common Purpose, a partner of ASSIST that runs leadership programs around the world to inspire people to work across boundaries.

Test Hero is an online platform which prepares students for taking college entrance tests. The interns worked on coming up with innovative ways to encourage people to sign-up and use the Test Hero online platform.

"The internship rendered opportunities to evaluate how

NGOs and social work can contribute to social economic development," says Sharma Vidhi, one of the interns. "Overall, I got to know better what NGOs does in their everyday work - their techniques, producing proposals, seeking grants and funds."

Although not all the interns had previous interests in the field of development, they agreed that it was an experience that surely raised their interest. Xu Shicheng, another intern, said, "Having experienced the work of NGOs, I am certainly interested in seeing more. I hope to have another chance to get to know more about the development sector."



A-TEAM

HOW DO YOU USUALLY SPEND YOUR WEEKENDS?



“ On weekends, I volunteer for an organization called Chinmaya Mission where I teach value education to children; it's my favorite part of the week. ”

Geeta Keswani
Senior Associate



“ I love exploring new things. These past few years, I've been getting into a lot of new things like tailoring, cooking, and gardening. ”

Eugene Nisperos
Multimedia Designer



“ I enjoy road trips, watching beautiful sceneries, going to beaches, trekking, and other outdoor activities. I'm planning to take driving lessons to start new journeys on my own. ”

Rhia Galman
Associate for ASA & Special Projects

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