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# 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.



Let us know your thoughts about this quarter's newsletter.

Click here



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Together, let us work hard in hand to build more sustainable societies.

You may connect with us through [info@assistasia.org](mailto:info@assistasia.org) or visit our website at [www.assistasia.org](http://www.assistasia.org) for more information.

# EDITORIAL TEAM

**Gabrielle Tañada & Ian Jamotillo**  
Co-Editors

**Jorel Quimpo & Kreazhalyn Anog**  
Design & Layout Artists

**Maxine Ferrer**  
Writer

Special thanks to:  
**Jape Magbuhos**

For further information, questions, and/or feedback about this newsletter and its contents, please contact [info@assistasia.org](mailto:info@assistasia.org). Our headquarters is located at Makati City, Philippines.

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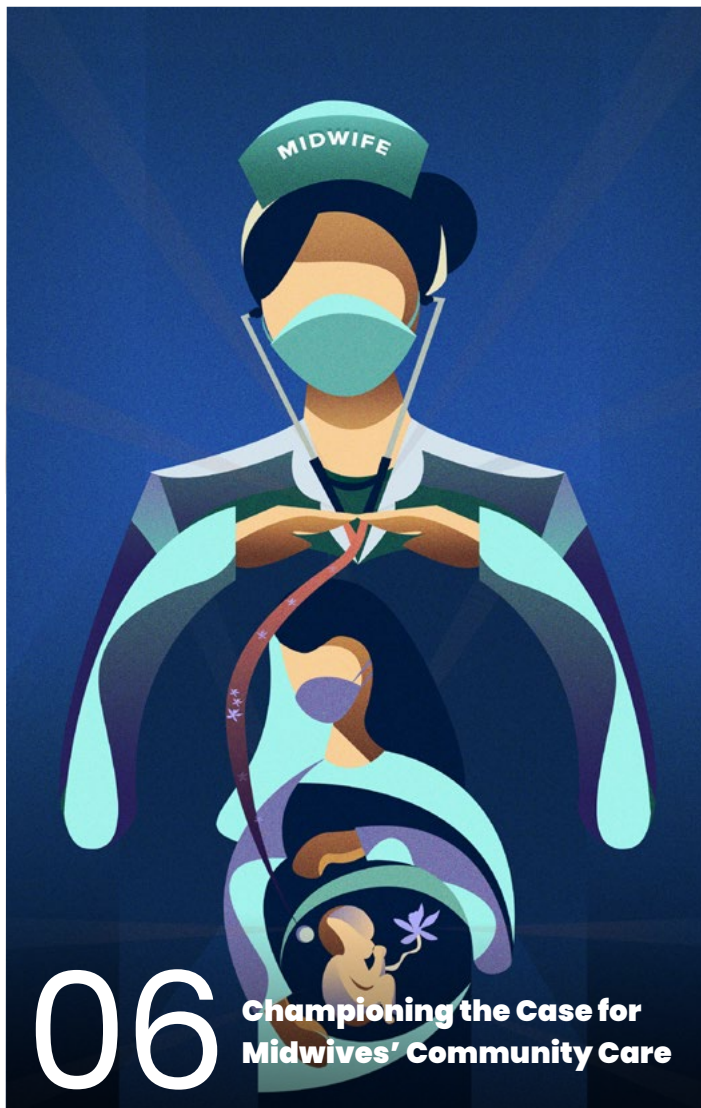
# WORKING TOWARDS THE SDGs

As part of the global development community, ASSIST aligns its initiatives with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To demonstrate this, stories in this newsletter end with the icons of the SDGs that they help achieve.



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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2021



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## Project Preview:



In Vietnam, the collection process for recyclable materials combines formal and informal channels. This has created an inefficient, multi-layered system with gaps that contribute to the country's environmental challenges.

There is potential to address this by engaging the waste pickers and aggregators involved in the collection process. Enter **RECOVER** (Reliable Collection in Vietnam to Enable Recycling), a new project being launched in partnership with the ALBA Group Asia Ltd. and Swire Pacific.

**RECOVER** will focus on empowering informal waste collectors

by providing equipment and training to improve their working conditions. These will contribute to increasing the volume of post-consumer PET collected. A digital trading platform is also set to be introduced with the long-term goal of establishing a more stable and productive waste collection system and connecting all members.

Stay tuned for more updates on RECOVER!







## Dressed for Success

**T**he Beauty for a Better Life (BFBL) project in partnership with L'Oréal Vietnam continues to empower underprivileged rural women through skills training on beauty services and basic finance, as well as small-scale business management. Notwithstanding the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, the project was able to produce qualified hairdressers to address gender inequality in the Vietnamese workforce.

Thanks to the success of the BFBL project and the great work done by both the organizers and the aspiring beauticians, L'Oréal Vietnam has invited ASSIST to run a new project on training e-commerce skills that is aimed at improving the lives of 7,000 vulnerable young people in Vietnam.

Read more about the impact of the BFBL project through these testimonials shared by our beneficiaries.

To date, Dien Bien Province has graduated its second batch of 24, and Batch 3 commences with 50 new participants. In Thanh Hoa Province, another successful batch of 21 graduated, and 14 more still are ready to become certified beauticians over in Ha Giang Province (Bac Quang District).



“

I had a chance to attend a very meaningful training program. I did not expect that it could be so methodical and effective. I feel very lucky for this opportunity as after 5 months of training, I am now confident enough to open my own hair salon.

- Ms. Duong Hanh  
Training Center at Thanh Hoa Province

“

I want to learn hairdressing so I registered for this training program right after finishing my high school. In my local area, there are only a few hair salons and they are all opened by people from different provinces. Through this program, I want to return to my area and open my own small hair salon to provide beauty services for my local people.

- Ms. Thung Thi Hang  
Training Center at Dien Bien Province



# Bridges for Community Building

The COVID-19 virus outbreak has resulted in significant delays in the majority of community work. Community-based organizations (CBOs) have shifted their efforts online, and “donor fatigue” is now a common occurrence in the funding world. In times of crisis, it is critical for CBOs to ramp up their services and address societal challenges. However, without assistance in developing their capacity, their efforts will remain trivialized.

The Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Transformation (ASSIST) partnered with the Sustained Health Initiatives of the Philippines (SHIP), Inc. for the **CABLE Bootcamp** with the overall goal of supporting CBOs working in the area of HIV service delivery and advocacy. The program seeks to strengthen 13 CBOs through training sessions and consultations to enable them to become sustainable, independent, and investible institutions.

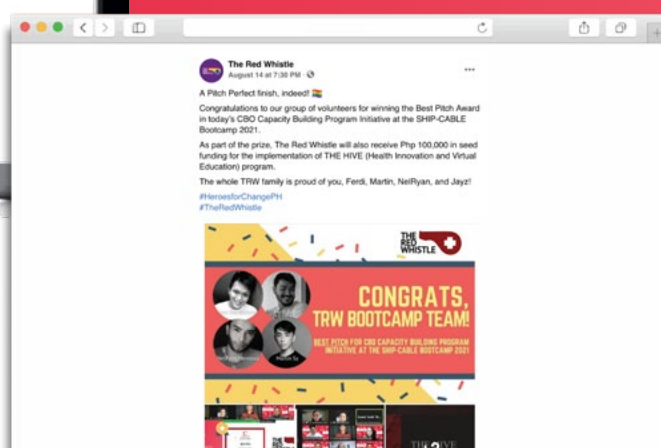
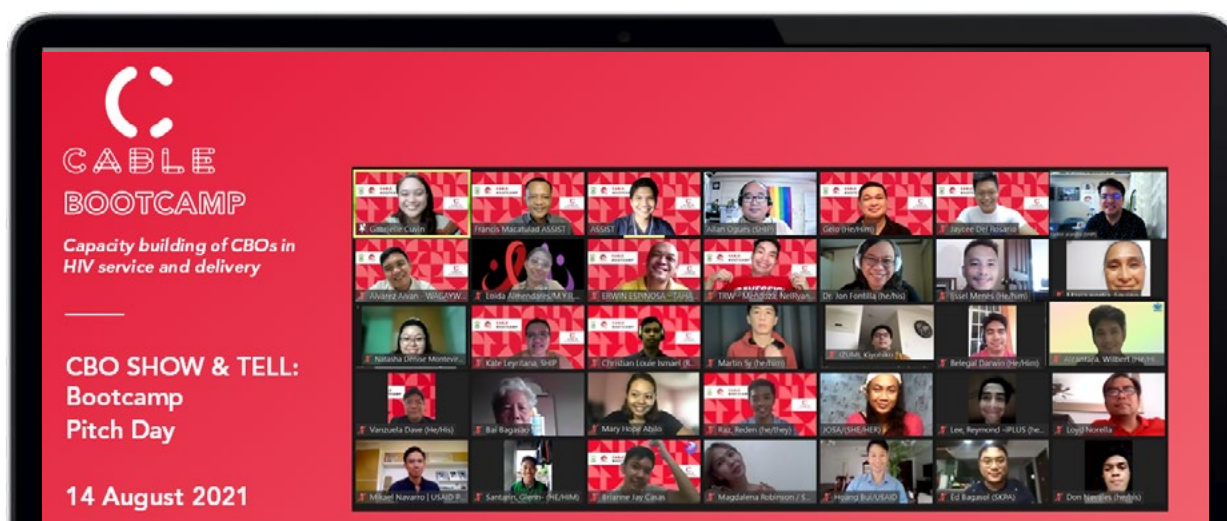
“The Bootcamp is a fantastic way to culminate the CABLE program. In many ways, it’s a beginning for a longer journey for all of the participants as Bootcampers and passionate CBOs,” said Sreeni Narayanan, Managing Director of ASSIST.

After six weeks of training, the CABLE Bootcamp Pitch Day - a cumulative event to showcase project proposals to several development partners was held for CBOs. Two successful groups bagged the top spot—iPLUS Advocacy Group and The Red Whistle. Both organizations will receive funding to sustain and operationalize their project on supporting People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in the Philippines.

According to a UNAIDS report, the Philippines is currently the fastest growing HIV epidemic in Asia and the Pacific region. HIV cases in the country surged from an estimated 4,300 in 2010 to 10,500 in 2016.



[Click here to watch video!](#)





# Championing the Case for Midwives' Community Care



**I**n times of chaos and crisis, people tend to look for heroes — or they step up and become one themselves. Having surpassed more than 2,400,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Philippines, a number steadily growing, it's clear that more needs to be done. At ASSIST, we understand our unique role and responsibility to help our communities and support our heroes. We have engaged with midwives, who care for very vulnerable populations (pregnant women, new mothers, and infants), across the country and empowered them as **Champions of Community Care**.

ASSIST's ongoing partnership with Project HOPE has expanded to launch this pilot COVID-19 training program for midwives nationwide. The project's first goal has already been exceeded, with more than 150 Master Trainers or Champions now able to cascade the training on COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Management and Vaccines to thousands of other midwives and midwifery students across different regions of the Philippines. But perhaps one of the biggest impacts of this project that we are already able to see is the creation of new platforms for midwives to connect with and support one another.

Midwives live with the people they care for in the farthest flung and hardest to reach provinces in the Philippines, thus are more trusted, more accessible, and more capable of connecting with people. The midwives we work with acknowledge that in the community of healthcare workers they are sometimes overlooked, but it's at these grassroot levels that people face the most challenges, as a lot of healthcare support doesn't reach them. Still, even before the pandemic, midwives have been going above and beyond their duties.

One of our Master Trainers, a retired midwife and senior citizen living in Canada, turns on her computer to connect with midwives in the Philippines over Zoom until midnight or later. She and many other participants in the program feel a strong sense of duty to ensure their fellow Filipino midwives are protected and able to continue to protect others.

Midwives know what their communities need and are situated to respond to those needs accordingly. Their unique role means they wear multiple hats and play various roles in contact tracing, vaccine administration, and more in addition to their existing work in prenatal and postpartum care. These overlooked healthcare workers that have toiled day and night since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic should widely be recognized as modern day heroes and we will continue to uphold these midwives and future midwives as our Champions of Community Care.

To access these materials and share them with your communities or for partnership inquiries, please contact **Franz Raña, Social Actions Manager** at [franz@assistasia.org](mailto:franz@assistasia.org)



# HERO gets green light for Southeast Asia roll-out

Following the success and positive reception of the **Healing, Education, Resilience & Opportunity for Healthcare Workers in the Philippines** (HERO-PH) project, Project HOPE and ASSIST are going beyond borders to reach more medical frontliners in Southeast Asia (SEA) through HERO-SEA.

Efforts are already underway in Vietnam and Cambodia, where new partnerships are being created with local healthcare worker (HCW) associations to roll-out the program. In the Philippines, the project has already been expanded to cover students taking up medicine, nursing, and other allied health courses, through the support of partners like Our Lady of Fatima University.

Vietnamese and Cambodian mental health experts are also being tapped to localize and translate the modules to fit the needs of their local HCWs. The ARGAO Center for Psychological Services will continue to support HERO-SEA's implementation in the Philippines.

HERO-SEA's training program focuses on five key modules initially developed by New York City Health + Hospitals, namely: Stress, Trauma, & Resiliency; Personal & Professional Wellness; Impact, Effect, & Outcome on HCWs; Seeking Help for Ourselves & Others; Resilience and Wellness Program Development.

After completing the training, certified Master Trainers are encouraged to cascade the knowledge gained to their colleagues in the medical field. Not only does this ensure the sharing of best practices, it also initiates the development of an accessible support system among their fellow HCWs, who continue to stand alongside them amid the ongoing pandemic.

Ngoc Tran, Project Coordinator for Vietnam, sees HERO-SEA as an opportunity to bring mental health and well-being to the forefront:

*"In Vietnam, mental health is still a relatively new concept so people have underestimated its value. However, many people have suffered from mental health issues during this pandemic, including the frontline HCWs. Projects like HERO-SEA will definitely help us provide support for them and raise awareness in the community."*

HERO-SEA activities in Vietnam and Cambodia are set to officially begin in October.



## Positive Results for the Test of Resilience

More than a year has passed since the launch of **Saving the Lives of Healthcare Workers in the Philippines** (SLHCWP) and ASSIST remains dedicated to helping healthcare workers through the ongoing crisis. In the past few months, over 12,000 PPEs were distributed to health facilities nationwide and more than 7,000 healthcare workers were trained on Infection Prevention Control (IPC) for COVID-19 and Mental Health & Resilience. On-site and remote IPC assessments in hospitals have also been underway.

Dr. Linell Malimbag, Hospital Administrator of the Metro Davao Medical and Research Center, currently works as an assessor in Davao del Norte. She collaborates with participating hospitals to ensure that HCWs and hospital staff remain safe while on duty, while also reducing the risk of bringing the virus home to their families.

ASSIST's work with medical frontliners like Dr. Malimbag has also provided deeper insight into their experiences. During the onset of the pandemic, she recalls almost 50% of the staff at her hospital resigning out of fear of getting sick. While the hospital remains dedicated to their patients' welfare, the IPC assessments add another layer of protection for the hospital staff.



Looking back at her experiences in SLHCWP, Dr Malimbag said: *"The impact of this program is like a ray of sunshine. Knowing that there are groups like ASSIST and Project HOPE that care about us and support us, I can't measure how comforting that is."*

For partnership inquiries, please contact **Francis Macatulad, Director of Projects and Strategy** at [francismac@assistasia.org](mailto:francismac@assistasia.org)





# Game ka na Vacc?

## Game na!

For over a year, ASSIST and Project HOPE have been supporting our frontliners' continued battle against COVID-19.

As the world works to overcome the pandemic's impact, we're joining forces once more to launch a communication campaign to address vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines - **#GameKaNaVacc!**



Follow the official ASSIST Facebook page and watch out for our special features in the coming weeks:



**#CheckTheVacc:** Confused by fake news and misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccines? We'll help you debunk common ones you may encounter.



**#ParaKaninoKaMagpapabakuna:** Millions of Filipinos have already been vaccinated. Listen to their stories of why you should get vaccinated too.



**#VaccineViernes:** Overwhelmed with all the scientific jargon? You're not alone. Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines with the help of songs, movies, and TV shows you know best.



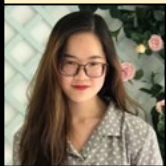
# A-TEAM:

## Class A for ASSIST

We asked our current and former interns what they thought of our internship program!  
Read what they said below.

### Question: How was your internship at ASSIST?

**Answer:** My internship at ASSIST was a blast. I started this journey worrying about my abilities and work experience. I remember the first day at work, one of my teammates looked me straight in the eyes and said, "You are here to learn, to gain experience. Don't worry if you make mistakes." I'm so lucky to have such supportive teammates at my first job ever.



**PHAM THANH LOAN**

Project Associate, Former Intern,  
Mekong

### Question: Why are internships important?

**Answer:** It helps provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession. For those who want to know what is suitable for them in the long run, doing an internship can be a great chance to figure out what you like and don't like. Having an internship builds your professional network and your resume, and it also provides opportunities for receiving feedback from your colleagues on a daily basis.

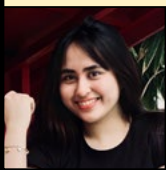


**NGOC BAO TRAM**

Intern, Mekong

### Question: What have you learned during your internship?

**Answer:** The channels that I have [learned about for my work] are Slack and Gather. I was surprised at how efficient and organized Slack can be, as it is structured and easy to navigate. Another one is Gather, which is an interactive platform that makes meetings and updates something you look forward to because of how it is organized.



**EINSTEIN METRILLO**

Intern, Philippines

### Question: What have you learned during your internship?

**Answer:** The importance of communication, transparency, and aligning goals and objectives. It is paramount to the success of any project to get these 3 things down. It matters to stakeholders, to fellow coworkers, and to partners. Getting this right means the project is on good footing to succeed.



**JK ASTURIAS**

Intern, Philippines

### Question: How was your internship at ASSIST?

**Answer:** My stay in ASSIST is the most wonderful experience, even in these difficult times. I've learned a lot from honing my design skills and the attitude I should have when working. In exchange, I really try my best in every task I am given. More than this, I would say that during my internship, I've felt like I belong. It's really important to me and it's something I will keep with me as I take the next steps in my [career] journey.



**JAPE MAGBUHOS**

Intern, Philippines

### Our interns recommendations:



**Online Courses:** Project Management and Other Tools for Career Development Specialization by University of California, Irvine, on Courser



**Books:** The Anthropocene Reviewed Podcast by John Green



**YouTube Channels:** The Futur, Satori Graphics, and Yes, I'm a Designer



**Podcasts:** The Happiness Lab and Help Me Be Me

## Project Showcase for Q3-Q4



### FHI 360 Vietnam SKConnect

The project seeks to increase awareness among the key populations in Hanoi, Tay Ninh and Tien Giang in Vietnam, on HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) services provided at public health facilities through social media and online ads.

#### What has been achieved so far?



Successfully launched two landing pages for the project's website



ASSIST managed the Facebook page and Google Ads of SKConnect

#### Until when will the project run?

June 2021 - October 2021

#### Who are our Partners?



### GIZ Digital Storytelling

This project aims to produce an appropriate digital knowledge product that can communicate the following messages:

- Impacts of slow-onset climate change on rural communities, and ecosystem-dependent livelihoods
- How these impacts can drive internal migration to urban or other rural areas
- How urban areas can become more sustainable through better public transport systems
- The role of both urban and rural communities in protecting and/or rehabilitating important ecosystems services and mitigating adverse climate change impacts

#### What has been achieved so far?



Developed a superhero concept for the campaign Climate Champions, which transforms complex climate change narratives into entertaining superhero stories.



Script for the materials are currently being developed

#### Until when will the project run?

June to November 2021

#### Who are our Partners?



Photo by Avel Chuklanov on Unsplash



# Project Showcase:

## Updates from July to September 2021

### Future Movers Programme

**Future Movers Programme** is a project in partnership with the German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc., Colombo Plan Staff College, and TÜV Rheinland Philippines, Inc. that aims to increase the employability of youth internally displaced persons (IDPs) through Vocational Educational and Training (VET).



Identified **750+** IDPs to be trained



Conducted **4** out of **4** Industry Placement Committee meetings



Trained **54** out of **25** target instructors



Developed the TVI Management Portal and Career Portal



### Building Enhanced (QHSE) Standards for Trucking in Vietnam

In partnership with Bolloré Logistics Vietnam, BEST seeks to increase the adoption of Quality, Environment, Health & Safety (QEHS) practices by small and medium sized local trucking companies.



Signed MoU with **14** truck vendors for training



Signed with **1** university in Ho Chi Minh for training



Completed the assessment, and training materials



### PROFIT Accelerator Programme

**PROFIT Accelerator** is a programme of the Asian Development Bank to promote regional opportunities for investment and trade, implemented by a consortium including IMC Worldwide, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and ASSIST.



**477** new registrations, an increase of **27** from July



About **216** clients have now been linked to mentors from vs. **176** at the end of July



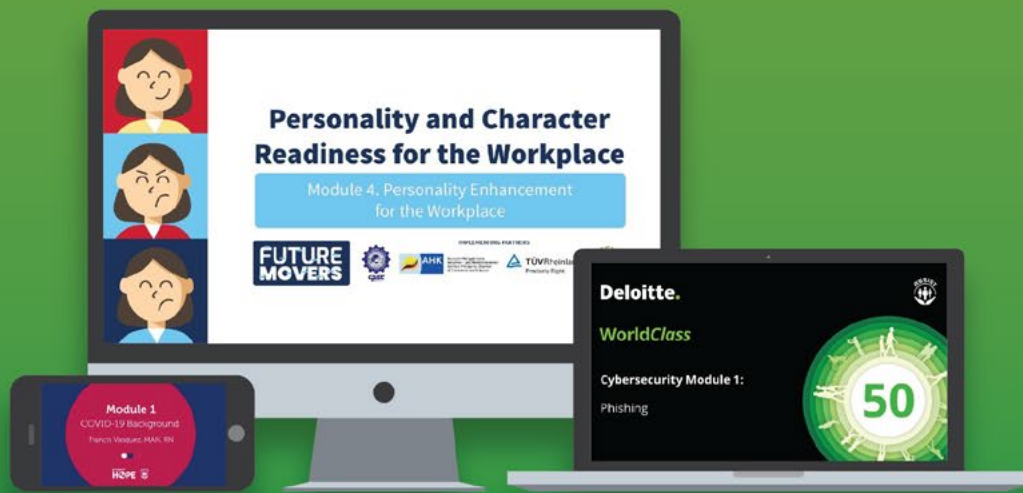
# ASSIST Academy



**ASSIST Academy** is a learning platform that offers **high quality educational opportunities for free!** Driven by our Partner for Progress philosophy, our content was created in partnership with leading nonprofit organizations and private corporations to deliver courses rooted in sustainable growth and capacity development.

## Learn all about:

### Soft Skills Development



### Health and COVID-19

### Cybersecurity

## And more!

We take the best practices and learnings from our diverse experiences and make them available to all, completely free.



**Video modules**



**Tests and exercises**



**Additional resources**



**Certificates**

***Start your learning journey for sustainable transformation at ASSIST Academy!***





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