

CONCEPT NOTE

DECENT WORK FOR ALL IN SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAINS (DW4AinSVCs)

Background

As a regional network promoting social entrepreneurship for sustainable development, the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA) holds the SEAL Conference every two to three years to define an agenda of the sector as a relevant stakeholder in resolving key development issues and concerns in the region and beyond.

The World Fair Trade Organization Asia (WFTO Asia), together with the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), will be co-leading the formation of the platform on Decent Work for all in Sustainable Value Chains (DW4AinSVCs). This platform will be one of the 4 platforms being created by ISEA to build back better on multiple SDGs post-COVID.

Introduction to the Platform

The Social Entrepreneurship movement had just started to gain momentum in Asia combatting inadequate infrastructure, unreliable state delivery of affordable housing and health services, and resource limitations. By employing innovative business models, social enterprises are addressing Asia's vast development needs in a sustainable manner using viable revenue models. More and more impact investors were also getting attracted to enter Asia's social enterprise space with an interest in supporting businesses with triple bottom line returns - that is, profits (or at least financial sustainability), and social and environmental impact. With the on-set of COVID, the Social Enterprises movement and the resources that it was attracting has gone into recession even though the pandemic has exposed the flaws of our current business systems making the Social Enterprise model imperative to build back better.

Social enterprises as decent work have the potential of transforming the lives of marginalized women. In Asia, women are on average 70% less likely than men to be in the labor force, with the country-to-country percentage varying anywhere from 3% to 80%. This gap persists despite economic growth, decreasing fertility rates, and increasing education. Many are in the informal economy. Surveys suggest that, relative to men, women are often perceived to have lower skills for the labor market. Further, social norms that emphasize domestic work as the primary responsibility of women constitute a significant constraint to their opportunities for employment, social activities and mobility, with the time spent on unpaid care work

and domestic tasks identified as a major barrier to their economic empowerment.¹ At the same time, of the 750 million illiterates globally, 2/3 are women and 68% of illiterates is in Asia Pacific. To enable women to engage in decent work, gender-just skills education, including social enterprise education, is a must.

Goals/Objectives

This platform would enable Social Enterprises working in sustainable value chains to seek help as well as to provide help to other Social Enterprises in building their respective enterprises in the post-COVID world. A lot of emphasis has been given to building sustainable value chains with COVID exposing the gaps in our current value chains. This platform would enable us to bridge those gaps while furthering our mission to provide decent work. This platform would

1. Showcase case studies of strong SE models that exemplify decent work and sustainable production and consumption, and gender-just education in support of social enterprises and decent work.
2. Serve as a venue for sharing (real) experiences related to DW4inSVCs;
3. The Platform can initiate and support research on decent work, sustainable production, and consumption (impact assessment of Fair Trade/Social Enterprise vis-a-vis DC4AinSVCs in uplifting/transforming lives of the poor);
4. Documenting best practices and cutting-edge practices related to DW4AinSVCs should be a function of the Platform;
5. The Platform will serve as an education mechanism for decent work and sustainable production and consumption that cover the 'ecosystem' of Social Enterprise and Fair Trade Community;
6. A leading program of the Platform would be the Accelerator Program that would help prepare SMEs/SEs to become full-pledged Fair Trade Enterprises that are practicing DW4AinSCVs;

Future Goals would also be to -

1. The Platform should also pursue capacity-building for SE/FTEs; and,
2. Market access and linkage will also be facilitated by the Platform.

Target Organizations

This platform will be created for Social Enterprises that meet the DW4AinSVCs eligibility guidelines.

DW4AinSVCs Eligibility Guidelines

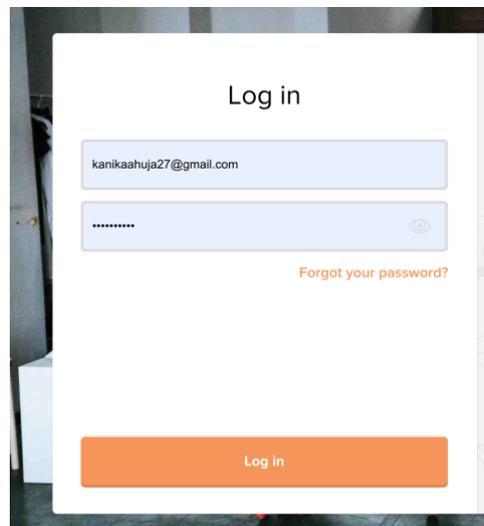
1. Social enterprises and SE-Support Organizations working in the scope of SDG 5, SDG8 and 13.
2. SEs and SE-Support Organizations that fulfill the Due Diligence Forms (To be developed). ‘
3. SE’s and SE-Support Organizations should be from Asia.
4. SE’s producing handicrafts¹ with localised supply chains.
5. SE’s and SE-Support Organizations should fulfill Protection guidelines for persons employed through the value chain.

Description

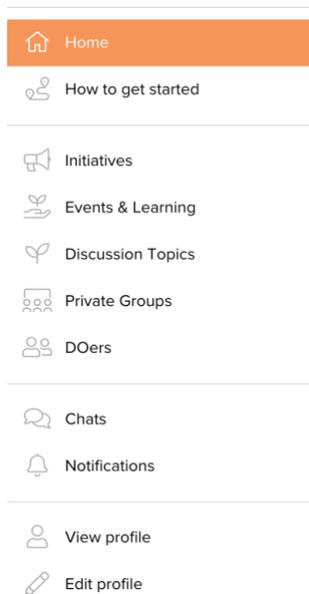
The project would be divided into three (3) components which will function independently but synchronously.

1. Information Sharing, Education, and Community Building Platform

A digital platform to facilitate information sharing, education, collaborations, and community building. This digital interface will be hosted on the web and members of this platforms will be able to login to this platform to access information, learn, view and connect with other organizations, access case studies on relevant leading innovations and creative business models and overall, build a community of like-minded individuals to broaden the impact of achieving the targeted SDGs.



Members that have been on-boarded to the platform will be given login details which will be used to access the platform. The members will need to create a profile for themselves and then will be able to interact with others in the network and access the network’s resources.



*(*Images taken from The DO Community platform)*

Once the user has logged in, the user will reach the main space for the platform. A side menu with the following (or similar options) will be present. The image on the side explains the different initiatives that can be carried out under the platform.

The platform would also enable and support research projects relevant to our specific SDGs. “Private groups” can be created within the platform that would enable collaboration projects between the members.

To the above menu, a “Resources” tab will be added which would become the information bank of the platform with Resources on Case Studies, Best Practices, Announcements from Relevant Stakeholders etc.

2. Gender Just Skills Education for Decent Work¹

The DW4AinSCVs Platform will promote the integral role of gender just skills education (GJSE) for decent work and social enterprises. It will be a platform to exchange experiences and peer mentoring in GJSE – looking at the successes and hurdles in implementing this practice.

NGOs and community-based organisations are mostly the ones at the forefront of GJSE. From their experiences, the principles and practices on GJSE can be scaled up by governments towards policies and programs that not only address economic productivity but are interventions that will help transform the lived realities of women.

GJSE have three principles:

1) Right to GJSE – Access to opportunities to skills education that provide knowledge and skills that promote economic empowerment and that addresses cultural norms that limit women’s choices and mobility

2) Rights within GJSE – A GJSE learning curriculum is based on adult learning principles, where the learner is at the centre of the learning process. The learning process respects their experiences. The learning curriculum is not just about ‘technical skills’ but addresses the root causes behind absence of technical skills.

3) Rights through GJSE - GJSE must make it possible for people to find decent work, to be aware of their rights and to be able to take control over their own lives and bodies.

Based on the experiences of Azad Foundation, India and Women-Headed Household Empowerment Program (PEKKA) in Indonesia and many other NGOs, GJSE work towards the creation of an ecosystem (family, education, transport, finance and banking, health to mention a few elements of this ecosystem) of support that will enable women to have opportunities to learn, acquire/upgrade/refresh skills especially in non-traditional livelihoods, thereby pursue a life of dignity.

The platform on DW4AinSVCs will be a venue for exchanges on experiences on effective GJSE programs and will offer peer mentoring within this community of practice.

3. The Fair Trade Accelerator

The business accelerator concept refers to an entity that helps new and start-up companies develop capacities to become successful. In Asia, a number of business incubators have been set up in major business universities or technological hubs but they have also been created to bring economic dynamism to communities there. Social innovation incubators and accelerators have also recently come to being for businesses that create a positive social impact through technology. These kind of programs provide a real impetus to the organization guiding them on strategy, learning how to run a successful business and providing network connections to enable success.

We propose creating the first of its kind Fair Trade Accelerator where social enterprises demonstrating exceptional social responsibility and high community impact potential for our target SDGs will have the opportunity to take their partnership further with this program.

The ***Fair Trade Artisan Accelerator*** will be an intensive accelerator program designed to give promising and engaged artisan businesses. The Fair Trade Accelerator will guide and support the enterprises on their journey of becoming Fair Trade compliant and provide the support they need to become vital players in the international marketplace for fashion and home design.

The selected organizations would engage in a series of intensive business development programs over the course of a minimum 3-month period.

Participating accelerator businesses automatically become part of the above digital platform which will have a team of highly motivated like-minded enterprises from around Asia.

Target Organizations:

1. Open call to all Social Enterprises in Asia.
2. Demonstrated impact on SDG8 and 13.
3. Working in the handicrafts¹ supply chain.

Enrollment Process:

1. Written application forms to apply for the Accelerator.
2. Shortlisted applicants will go through an on-call interview process.
3. A cohort of 8-10 organizations will be created.

The program Structure

The accelerator will select potentially successful business ideas and induct them into the accelerator cohort. These businesses will then be mentored over a 3-month period with additional 3 months of hand-holding support.

1. Intensive coaching sessions to enhance their skills in business related functions: Marketing, Financial Management, Strategy etc. This will be over a period of 2 months with sessions running once a week. The 3rd month will be utilised to enable the enterprises to practice what they have learnt and receive feedback on their strategy moving forward. One week during the 3rd month will be dedicated entirely to education on Audit documentation (Remote Compliance Training).
2. Weekly special sessions from independent groups: To further develop on the business sessions, the businesses will be aided with sessions from supporting functions. For example, financial support opportunities, guest lectures on digital marketing, trend forecasting etc.
3. Application to WFTO: An opportunity to avail free WFTO membership for a year will be given to top 3 organizations.¹

Key Actors and Structure

