

DESTINATION: GOOD



The AirAsia Foundation (airasiafoundation.com) team talks shop about the people they meet and the ideas they come across as they travel the Asean region on their unique mission: to meet social entrepreneurs and explore ways to support their growth.



ASEAN CONNECTION

Let us tell you a story about a farmer. Jakkapong Mongkhonkeeree is a coffee farmer from the Muser Mountains of northwestern Thailand. We first met him in 2013 in Bangkok at a meeting organised by the Thai social enterprise incubator ChangeFusion. Back then, AirAsia Foundation was newly formed and we were looking to be introduced to promising social enterprises.

Jakkapong spoke only Thai, but he communicated (through translators) something special about his project, which soon brought us 400km upcountry to the lush Muser highlands that bordered Myanmar. Jakkapong doesn't just grow coffee – he grows shade-grown coffee, a farming method that he gradually improved over the last 30 years to enable indigenous farmers to aid in forest rehabilitation while earning an income.

Shade-grown coffee cultivation here works like this: Farmers purchase a set of beans (Robusta and Arabica), which they sow in their ancestral family plots within the forest. Once mature, the coffee bushes bear fruit twice a year; the farmers harvest and sell these fruits to Jakkapong at fair trade prices (a little over twice the regu-

lar price). The difference is justified by the special properties of shade-grown beans – they are higher in anti-oxidants because of lower sun and rain exposure, and they are grown more sparsely over a natural area. Jakkapong then processes the beans and either sells them raw wholesale or in smaller roasted quantities at the indigenous communities market.

Over time, he quietly won over fellow farmers, training thousands and buying regular harvests from 70 families. These families have been able to remain in their ancestral lands even after the area was redesignated as the Taksinmaharat National Park – mainly because Jakkapong has been able to show that the ethnic farmers share a common interest with conservationists in rehabilitating the forests.

In 2013, he applied to the AirAsia Foundation for funds to purchase a new roaster and start a small loans pool for farmers starting their first coffee crops. These were readily granted, but soon, we also realised that with the new capacity and output, Jakkapong would have to widen his distribution channels beyond the indigenous communities market.

We began sharing his story and offers of help soon poured in. Executives at Y&R Malaysia redesigned

Jakkapong's Muser coffee packaging to better reflect the quality of the product and appeal to urban consumers. Nokhook Group, a Thai social enterprise, started marketing and distributing the new shade-grown coffee to top gourmet markets in Bangkok. Touched by the quality of his beans, our colleagues at AirAsia Thailand began selling Muser drip coffee onboard. In 2016, Jakkapong sold 85 per cent more roasted beans than in 2014. As much as 35 per cent of his income that year derived from sales



of drip coffee sachets, largely due to the support of AirAsia. Muser shade-grown coffee is no longer just quaint coffee from a small shop in the Muser Mountains, but a specialty brew enjoyed by coffee lovers on AirAsia!

As ASEAN celebrates its 50th anniversary on August 8, this story is our way of capturing what it means to be part of the Asean community. It is about understanding our culture, protecting our nature and nurturing great ideas. It is also about bringing people together to find solutions that make a better future.

We hope Jakkapong has inspired you as he has us. Happy ASEAN Day!

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FOUNDATION
IS AN ASEAN
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ORGANISATION**



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE UPDATES

Our Asean footprint expands this month with three new social enterprise grants. Read more about our grant scope at airasiafoundation.com/social-enterprise.



EAT THE PICHA PROJECT, MALAYSIA You can't get heartier food than a meal with The Picha Project. The brainchild of three young Malaysians, this social enterprise helps refugee families earn an income through cooking. Our grant enables refugee families to host regular dinners for paying diners interested to learn more about their culture through their traditional dishes from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq or Myanmar. www.pichaproject.com



SHOP ZÓ PROJECT, VIETNAM Paper is so much a part of our lives that we often take it for granted. Not so for this social enterprise, which aims to reinvent Vietnamese Dó paper production by introducing contemporary uses for this fine paper, once reserved for religious scrolls. With our support, new paper-makers will be trained to pass on skills that date back to the 8th century. zopaper.com



RECYCLE GARBAGE CLINICAL INSURANCE, INDONESIA Dr Gamal Albinsaid is a doctor who is always brimming with ideas to make healthcare accessible to the poor. Garbage Clinical Insurance (GCI) is his health micro insurance scheme that enables participants to convert household waste into credits for clinical treatments. Having piloted one clinic, our funds help Dr Gamal start a second clinic in Malang, Indonesia this year. indonesiamedika.com