Economic Empowerment Fellows Biographies

Cohort One Southeast Asian Participants: April 5 - May 12, 2013

Burma

Ms. KHAING Kyawt Kay
Director, United Amara Bank Limited, Rangoon

I hail from Myanmar and graduated with Honors from the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, where I gained my Bachelor’s degree in Business and Finance. I also completed an Advanced and Higher Diploma course in Business Administration from Thames Business School in Singapore with distinction. I also hold a diploma in Banking and Finance from SHRI, outsourced by MAS Singapore. I started my professional career in May 2006 as an Assistant Manager at IGE Pte. Ltd Singapore and was promoted to Deputy General Manager in October 2007. Since July 2010, I have been appointed as a member of the Board of Directors of United Amara Bank Limited. Currently I am managing Wholesale Banking, Risk and Credit, Trade Finance and the Treasury Sector at United Amara Bank. I like traveling, especially to historical places where I can learn about history and culture. I hope that I will have gained diverse and refreshing ideas and opinions from different cultural backgrounds after finishing this program.

Mr. MIN Min
National Project Manager, Myanmar Business Coalition on Aid, Rangoon
I am a national project manager working at a local NGO aimed at increasing incomes in dry zone regions through linkages with better information and wider business access. Before taking on this position, I also worked as the Livelihoods Project Manager at Mercy Corps, an INGO, aiming to increase food security and livelihoods in Delta (Labutta) and as the Cash Grant Project Manager at Acted, an INGO with the purpose of recovering livelihoods destroyed by the severe Cyclone Nargis in 2008. I also performed trade and investment promotion duties as a commercial officer of KOTRA for 8 years. I also worked for two private companies as soon as Myanmar opened its doors to the private sector. I obtained my first degree, B.Sc in 1993 and my MBA in 1999 from the Institute of Economics Yangon. My specializations and interests are private sector development, micro-finance, trade promotion, self-reliance in groups and value chain. I got married in 2004.

Cambodia

Ms. OK Kunthy
Maternal and Child Health Officer, Kampot Provincial Health Department, Kampot

I am the Maternal and Child Health Officer of Kampot Provincial Health Department in southern Cambodia. My community is mostly rural, with many poor women and children. As a wife and mother as well as a trained midwife, nurse, educator and administrator, I have developed a deep interest in improving the lives of the most vulnerable members of Cambodian society. My experiences working with the University of Toronto Centre for International Health from 2005-2010 and with the Cambodian Ministry of Health from 2003 until present have focused heavily on health equity and funding, and maternal and infant health issues.

I enjoy reading and learning new information.

Mr. NOEM Chhunn
Co-Founder and Training Manager, SmallWorld, Phnom Penh
Chhunn (Chhunny) has a Buddhist foundation and, through the Pagoda family routines and education, discovered the skills that he applies today to maintain a balanced lifestyle. His degree is in Buddhist Philosophy, from the International Buddhist University (MCU), Chiang Mai, Thailand, where he majored in Humanities.

Today he works as a professional Senior Trainer in the corporate environment delivering Leadership Development and Management Solutions for PossibilitiesWorld; his personal focus is on Leadership and Conflict Resolution. He is a co-founder of SmallWorld Cambodia where his responsibilities are peacekeeping, community & interpersonal communications, cultural preservation, and philosophy. The students who attend his SmallWorld workshops come to learn about personal development, team building, and youth empowerment. His own project, dharmatravelers, was recently formed to teach students and young people the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle (personal/family/business/community).

Meditation is an important pillar in his teachings, but he also loves to have fun spending time socializing and communicating, especially with today’s youth and young people just stepping out into the world! His big goal is to become a major contributor to helping Cambodians achieve their own passions, dreams and goals and to help them build inner-peace through true understanding.

Laos

Mr. PHOUXAY Thepphavong
Head, Secretary and General Affairs Division and Secretary to the President, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vientiane

After obtaining a Bachelor’s of Business Administration at the Asia-Europe Business College and a Bachelor of Arts at the National University of Laos, Mr. Phouxay Thepphavong joined the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) in October, 2007. Now he is the head of the Secretary and General Affairs Division, secretary to the president and a member of the Strategy Development Team.

He has responsibilities to: (1) facilitate public and private dialogue at the national and provincial levels (Lao Business Forum and Provincial Public Private Dialogue) in order to create an effective policy framework for the development of a business climate in Lao PDR, (2) facilitate an ongoing dialogue between the government and the private sector in order to promote fair and consistent interpretation of laws and regulations, (3) remove barriers to private sector investment and provide information on policies and regulations that affect the private sector and (4) identify these constraints and possible solutions to address to the government of the Lao PDR, (5) provide management training to several Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Lao PDR and (6) assist local SMEs to establish business groups and associations.

Phouxay lives in Vientiane, the capital, with his wife, Ms. Souphaphone, and a little son, Mr. Ocean. In his free time, he likes to play football and associate with friends.
Ms. SOUKANLAYA Rattanavong  
Program Quality Assurance and Research Manager  
Development Environment Community Association, Vientiane

I have an Advanced Diploma in Business Accounting from Sydney, Australia, a Bachelor of Economics from Vientiane, Lao PDR and a Master's in International Community Development from Melbourne, Australia.

I am currently working as a Program Quality Assurance and Research Manager with a newly established local NGO called Development Environment Community Association (DECA). Previously I was a permanent staff member at World Vision Laos (2007-2009). I have also been involved with many international NGO’s such as Save the Children Norway, CARE International, JICA, GAZ, and with various government and private sector agencies in areas concerning micro economic and community development issues.

Recently I was involved in the organizing of the 9th Asia-Europe People’s Forum (AEPF) hosted by the Civil Society and Mass organization of Laos. The AEPF is a significant platform for people to express their needs and concern towards sustainable development in Lao PDR. My role included data collection advice and analyzing of data, which was to be used in drafting the people’s statement at the forum.

My interests and passions include ensuring that the rights of vulnerable and poor people are represented and protected, participating in the promotion of sustainable development in Lao PDR, and being a role model and inspiration for the next generation.

Thailand

Mr. PAYONG Srithong  
Farmer and Consultant on Organic Agriculture and Environmental Management, Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Bangkok
“Born into a farming family, Payong knows well what it is like to be caught in the cycle of debt. That is why he believes ecological farming and a self-sufficient way of life are the answer.”

_Bangkok Post Outlook_  
_August 8, 2006_

Payong Srithong is an ecological farmer and the founder of the Project for Agroecology Development and Plant Genetic Resources Conservation (AGRECO/PGRC), a small civil society organization based in Dan Chang, Suphan Buri, Thailand. Trained as a political scientist at Thammasart University, Payong quit political theories and switched to agriculture and natural resource management. He and his wife, Raweewan, have been working to preserve local wisdoms and biodiversity; and to promote ecologically sound organic agriculture and sustainable resource management among the rural poor and ethnic Karen people in the western part of Thailand since 1992.

Since 1999, Payong has been a consultant on organic agriculture and environmental protection for the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), a non-profit organization under the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand, where he has provided training in organic gardening and environmental protection to Burmese refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Payong’s works are recognized both in Thailand and abroad as he has been invited to share his experience with farmers and development agencies in other countries in the region. He has also received numerous awards, including the Green Globe Award for dedication and achievement in forest protection in Thailand and the CSR Award for helping marginalized farmers to sustain their livelihoods via organic farming and community-supported agriculture. In 2000, Payong was selected to the Ashoka Fellowships by Ashoka Innovators for the Public, a philanthropy based in Arlington, Virginia.

Ms. NATEDAO Taotawin  
*Lecturer, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchatani University, Ubon Ratchatani*

I have been trained in social science, particularly social development, sociology of agriculture, and gender study. After I finished my Ph.D. in 2011, I began to teach in the Social Development Program on the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchatani University, Thailand. Ubon Ratchatani Province is located in Northeastern Thailand and is connected to Lao PDR. In addition, I am a researcher working in regard to poverty eradication, gender empowerment, and decent work for Thai and Lao workers. I also work as a volunteer for some local community organizations and local NGOs in Ubon Ratchatani Province, particularly those which work on community development, community enterprise, and gender empowerment. Since my Ph.D. dissertation is about organic rice farming and trade, I work with some local communities which grow and sell organic rice as community enterprises. I hope that participation in the Economic Empowerment Fellows program will provide me knowledge and a network which will benefit my careers as an academic researcher and a social volunteer.
Ms. TRAN Thi Phuong
Manager, Healing the Wounded Heart Shop, and Coordinator, Rehabilitation and Operation Program, Genetic Counseling and Disabled Children Fund, Hue

I am Phuong. I am 35 years old. I am living with my parents and my younger brother’s family. I was born with a lower limb paralyzed. Every day, when looking at my friends, I wish that I could go out on foot and join in all their activities like others do. The crutch is my best friend, and it always stands by me and supports me as I go to school and fulfill my dream. With two Bachelor’s degrees in English and Information Technology and a Master’s degree in Educational Management, I can find a good and favorable job. Because of my experience with disabilities, I hope to devote my life to working to support people with disabilities, especially through creating suitable jobs with fair incomes so that they can integrate well into society. I understand that I am not a strong lady, but I do believe that I can bring a better life to people with disabilities.

Mr. DANG Quang Minh
Director, Hanoi Organic Roots, Hanoi

Dang Quang Minh, director of Hanoi Organic Roots, is among the young social entrepreneurs that believe in social innovation to reduce poverty. Minh has successfully transformed a development project that supported poor farmers in growing and selling organic vegetables into a leading company that supplies organic produce to 800 families in Hanoi. Hanoi Organic Roots has also offered educational tours of the organic farm to 5000 school children in Hanoi since 2010.

Minh speaks Chinese and English. He loves organic food and working with farmers and kids. He graduated from Tongji University, Shanghai, China, with a major in Chinese language and business.
Ms. Leslie Jensen
*Vice-President and Commercial Banker, First Interstate Bank, Fellowship Coordinator for Ms. KHAING Kyawt Kay*

Leslie Jensen has been in the economic development and banking industry for more than 25 years, most recently as Vice President and Commercial Banker at First Interstate Bank in Missoula. Leslie serves a portfolio of commercial credit and deposit clients, is the liaison with Small Business Bankers for informal mentoring and formal credit approval, specializes as a Community Development Lender with responsibility for multi-family and senior housing tax credit projects, and generally works with small business clients to identify ways to make their businesses more successful. Her broad experience in the small business economic development and lending realm includes skills in business feasibility assessment, business plan preparation, cash flow preparation and analysis, business lending structure, underwriting, and risk assessment, and business relationship management. Leslie has a master’s degree in Business Administration from the University of Montana, is the treasurer of the board for the Missoula Art Museum and the Clark Fork Market, and has served as a member on boards of directors for numerous other NGOs and organizations.

Mr. Chad Lee
*Business Development Officer, Montana Department of Agriculture, Fellowship Coordinator for Mr. MIN Min*

Chad Lee is the Business Development Officer for the Montana Department of Agriculture, located in Helena, Montana’s capital city. Chad’s focal areas include business recruitment and assisting new and expanding agriculture-related businesses by gathering financial, regulatory, market information and by helping individuals and businesses make connections. Chad has developed decision tools to assist farmers compare the potential economic returns of different
crop rotations and compare the economics of organic farming with conventional farming. Since 2009, Chad has worked extensively to assist the development of Montana’s legume industry (peas, lentils, chickpeas). His efforts have focused on two things: (1) working to attract and connect buyers and processors with farmers and (2) working to improve farmers understanding of the economic opportunity and helping to connect farmers with the technical experts and information needed to successfully pursue the opportunity. In his current position, Chad draws upon a lifelong passion for agriculture, his experience farming, and from the collective knowledge of his and his wife’s families’ experience farming in north central Montana. Chad’s family’s farm has operated for nearly a century, growing barley, wheat, canola, peas, oats, and alfalfa forage and raising beef cattle. Chad is married and has two daughters (age 5 and 2). Chad enjoys fishing, sailing, hiking, riding bicycle, snow skiing, playing tennis, and working on his family’s farm.

Cambodia

Ms. Shawn Hinz
Director of Family Health Services, RiverStone Health, Fellowship Coordinator for Ms. OK Kunthy

Shawn is the Director of Family Health Services and the Montana Public Health Association South Central Region Vice President. She serves on the North Park Children’s Board, which is studying ways to bring high quality childcare to the North Park area. As Director, Shawn provides day to day supervision and progressive management expertise for coordination of several grant funded services to include Maternal Child Health; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Intensive Case Management; Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children; Rural School Nursing, and the Recognized Diabetes Program. This position entails problem-solving, decision making, planning, and communication skills to ensure effective, efficient, and quality operations of clinic, office visits, and home based services for families. Shawn has degrees in psychology and sociology, counseling and guidance, and public health. She was awarded the Montana Public Health Association Exemplary Service Award in both 2001 and 2007.

Mr. John Balsam
Principal, John Balsam Associates, LLC, Fellowship Coordinator for Mr. NOEM Chhunn

John Balsam is Principal of John Balsam Associates, LLC, a small, independent consultancy started in 2006 based on John’s nearly 20 years of service to technology entrepreneurs, small technology firms, universities, and state and federal agencies.
John Balsam Associates provides services primarily in three areas — (a) consulting to tech-based firms pursuing federal or state funding opportunities; (b) market research and commercialization planning on emerging technologies; and (c) technical writing in the form of award nominations, research proposals, and commercialization plans.

Prior to starting his own business, John worked for the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) for more than 15 years. Under a contract with the US Department of Energy (DOE), he consulted with small firms across the country as they worked to develop and commercialize innovative, new energy technologies. Concurrently, he helped establish the first small-business “incubator” in Montana, and later developed and operated the first “incubator-without-walls” to serve small businesses throughout a seven-county region within Montana. The incubator-without-walls model was later replicated in nine other regions throughout the state.

During 1993-1997, John took a break from this activity to serve as Director of the Montana Entrepreneurship Center at the University of Montana in Missoula. The Entrepreneurship Center’s role was to connect small, technology-based businesses with needed resources at the University, such as technical expertise, specialized equipment, student resources, etc. At this time, John began concentrating more of his activity on technology-based R&D businesses to help them attract funding through two federal programs — the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. Today, funding from these two programs brings nearly $10 million to small technology companies in Montana each year.

Finally, he decided it was time not just to help entrepreneurs, but also to become one, and he started John Balsam Associates, LLC. John’s business activity is built on a network of local, state, and federal programs and contacts, as well as contacts and relationships with scores of businesses throughout the state and even throughout the country.

Laos

Mr. Joseph Unterreiner
President and CEO, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, Fellowship Coordinator for Mr. Phouxay THEPPHAVONG

Joe Unterreiner is the President and CEO of the Kalispell (MT) Chamber of Commerce. In this capacity, he also serves as the executive director for the Kalispell Chamber Foundation and for the Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District. In addition to his work at the Kalispell Chamber, Mr. Unterreiner serves on the US Chamber of Commerce’s Committee of 100.

Previously, he worked from 1985 to 1995 in the field of commercial real estate development and financing in Southern California including assignments with Maguire Thomas Partners and the Pasadena Marketplace. In the government sector, Unterreiner was selected as a US Presidential Management Intern and completed assignments in The White

Joe holds a MPA and BS degrees in public administration from the University of Southern California. Mr. Unterreiner was designated as a Certified Chamber Executive by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives in 2006. His work to improve the education and workforce systems resulted in recognition from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies with its William Heartwell Jr. Award and by the Governor of Montana with the Desiree Taggart Memorial Award. Under his leadership, the Kalispell Chamber was recognized in 2007 as the Outstanding Business Retention and Expansion Program by Business Retention and Expansion International.

Ms. Jan Tusick
Program Director, Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center, Fellowship Coordinator for Ms. Soukanlaya RATTANAVONG

Jan Tusick is the co-founder and Director of Lake County Community Development Corporation’s Mission Mountain Market Food Enterprise Center—a Food, Agriculture and Cooperative Development Center. The center provides a unique opportunity for area agricultural producers and food entrepreneurs in their business development by providing a USDA and FDA inspected shared-use processing facility with technical expertise and support. During the last 20 years Jan has effectively assisted food businesses, cooperative groups and value added agricultural ventures in their business development, providing business and market planning, capitalization development, feasibility analysis, and navigating the food regulatory world. She is a founding steering committee member of Grow Montana, a coalition of organizations that are focused on developing and pursuing policies that will strengthen Montana’s regional food economy.

Her agricultural background of 35 years gives her a solid foundation in the agricultural economy and the challenges it faces. Jan holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Science from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA. She presently lives on an eighty acre sheep farm with her husband, Will, and their main production is natural lamb, which they direct market. As a committed agriculturist in Montana, Jan understands the challenges facing the small farmer today and is proactive in working hard to bring opportunities to Montana farmers and ranchers.

Ms. Jill Belsky
Professor, Department of Society & Conservation, College of Forestry & Conservation, University of Montana, Fellowship Coordinator for Ms. Natedao TAOTAWIN

Thailand
Jill M. Belsky was born in Teaneck NJ in 1956. Despite growing up outside New York City, she loved rural areas and especially mountainous area, as well as international travel and places. She was very fortunate to earn a scholarship to a wonderful small college where she was able to earn a combined degree in Anthropology and Sociology, as well as participate in field studies in Yugoslavia and Belize on rural development. These experiences propelled her for further study. She earned both her graduate degrees at Cornell University in Rural and Development Sociology, with a focus on agricultural and natural resources and years of field work on rural livelihoods and hillside conservation in the Philippines and Indonesia. In 1991 she joined the Sociology Department at the University of Montana where she taught courses in environmental sociology, international development, and gender and development, and continued research in Southeast Asia and Belize, the later in rural ecotourism. A decade later she moved her faculty home to the College of Forestry & Conservation to help create a new department in Society & Conservation, where she teaches classes in Environment & Development, Community Forestry & Conservation and Political Ecology, directs a small center for building bridges between university scholarship and rural development, and continues to supervise many graduate students. Over the last seven years she has been assisting a small conservation and development institute in Bhutan to build faculty capacity for research and development in rural community environment and economic development.

Mr. Joshua Slotnick  
Faculty, Environmental Studies, University of Montana, Founder & Director of PEAS Farm, Fellowship Coordinator for Mr. Payong SRITHONG

Vietnam

Mr. Tony Cline  
CEO, CorEnterprises, Fellowship Coordinator for Ms. TRAN Thi Phuong

Ms. Laura Garber  
Owner and Co-Operator, Homestead Organics Farm, Inc, Fellowship Coordinator for Mr. DANG Quang Minh