

FEEDBACK FROM WS1 TRANSFORMATIVE ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS AT THE ASEAN GRASSROOTS: HOPE & INCLUSION

WS1 coordinated by Denison Jayasooria (Malaysia) of ASEC (Asian Solidarity Economy Council) and ASEC panel of speakers were Ben Quinones (Philippines), Eri Trinurini & Chandra Firmantoko (Indonesia), Boonsom Namsomboon & Daodol Rummanpol & Kon Onn Sein (Malaysia)

About thirty people participated at this WS1 held on Nov 3, 2018 from 11am to 1pm at ACSC/APF 2018 in Singapore

1 Describe the key challenges identified in the workshop discussion

Identified multiple challenges. The first, is that majority of the participants of ACSC/APF did not have an understanding of sustainable development goals (SDG) nor the theme of social solidarity economy (SSE) or that of the ASEAN Community vision 2025. They had no idea of what are alternative economic systems. We found that people could identify issues & concerns but not focused on finding effective solutions. While they had a good idea of human rights violations they did not have a holistic intervention strategies especially that of SDGs & SSE as a window of involvement with their governments especially those in restrictive countries.

Second we identified challenges faced by specific vulnerable & disadvantaged communities through the case studies presented such as the indigenous people/ forest based communities, street vendors/ informal economy, urban poor communities, women in the B40 categories, rural families & communities. These also includes migrants both those from rural to urban from poorer/lesser developed ASEAN countries to richer countries in search of jobs and better living. These communities faced economic, social & human rights abuses of lack of access to resources and opportunities.

2 Why is this a challenges?

This basically due to the model of development which is based on neo liberal capitalism where markets and big business including big investments are given priorities for economic growth. Development is being measured by GDP and rate of investments. A balanced SDG understanding is lacking where the concerns of people (human rights, socio-economic), environment, sustainability are not taken into account in the practice although highlighted in political rhetoric.

Many grassroots communities in the B40 (bottom 40 % of the socio-economic ladder) are marginalised and side-lined. They are disempowered, lacking basic info of their rights especially in very restrict political environments.

Migration is taking place because the focus of development is at the city level and therefore jobs/employment opportunities at the rural/village is limited. So people have to leave their traditional places in search of jobs and better livelihood opportunities and for a better quality

of life. Much of the services such as schools, hospitals and entertainment is available in the urban locations as rural and small towns are neglected development zones.

3a Who are the affected/discriminated groups

Vulnerable & disadvantaged communities: the indigenous people/ forest based communities, street vendors/ informal economy, urban poor communities, women in the B40 categories, rural families & communities. Migrants both those from rural to urban from poorer/lesser developed ASEAN countries to richer countries with work permits or without work permits.

3b Who are the stakeholders

Civil society, NGOs, local communities especially grassroots leaders or leaders of community groups such as informal sector or indigenous people or village leaders. Also government officials of relevant agencies, academics & researchers, international aid agencies, UN agencies

3c Who should be involved in overcoming the challenge

CSO/NGOs such as those working with the vulnerable & disadvantaged communities, academics & researchers (local universities), policy advocacy people who are taking up the cause at local, sub regional, national, regional and global levels. Also relevant government agencies and institutions, ASEAN institutions such as ASEAN human rights commission etc, UNDP, UNHCR etc

4 How can the challenge be overcome?

Overcoming is through organising & empowering the vulnerable & disadvantaged people to know their socio-economic & human rights (right to development via SDGs & SSE)

Awareness raising & policy advocacy. Networking with UNESCAP via the SDG dialogues like the Asia Pacific CSO engagement mechanism and the APSD Forum at Bangkok and the UN High level political forum

Strengthening networking and cooperation among the local CSO/NGO and local communities.

5 What can civil society do now before the next ACSC/APF?

Need to document best practices. At this workshop we provided a link between SDG & SSE with the ASEAN community vision. We highlighted 4 case studies. There are so many grassroots community based initiatives which is alternative to the dominating models of big corporate business. We need to make the alternatives visible as sustainable alternative socio-economic models which are operating at the ground and which are sustainable.

In this we can list the challenges & issues but using the SDG – goals, targets & indicators we can undertake a major mapping exercise.

In addition to advocacy & protect methods work with affected people in finding alternative solutions. They have to survive within the circumstance, they can be taking handouts but those both political empowerment & socio-economic empowerment we can seek to build their capabilities to find alternative roads

Important for CSO/NGO to have a clear conceptual understanding of SDGs from both socio-economic development & human rights concerns with a firm commitment to environmental sustainability. Important to link principles and values as we need to confront the ideological level at the one hand and the practice level at the other- seeking to bring change via grassroots intervention.

Get the cooperation of all the ASEAN CSOs to undertake a mapping exercise with the 17 SDG goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators. Do this review using SSE and compare this with the ASEAN community vision 2025. We need to show the ASEAN leadership that we are a strategic partner in the implementation & achieving the ASEAN 2025 agenda of creating an asean community

6 Where is the challenges & where would the proposed action take place?

Challenge with CSO/SDG at local, national & regional levels. Many are not aware and have not taken SDGs seriously although it is the UN 2030 agenda. Many are caught up with the funding sources to monitoring human rights violations. CSOs can keep to their core work but expand to monitor human rights concerns based on economic, social & cultural rights along with economic & social. SDGs provide an excellent opportunity.

We can take up SDG 5 & SDG 10 addressing discrimination including that of gender and SDG 16 which is a focus on justice, peace and accountable institutions. In this context sustainability (environmental) concerns based on many other SDG pertaining to forest or consumption

7 Recommendations

Recommendations 1: Undertake a study on SDGs -2030 agenda & ASEAN community agenda 2025 and map out the agreed position by ASEAN governments on addressing discrimination (like SDG 5, 8, 10 & 16). This could be done by assigning the task to a team of academic and policy advocates among CSO/NGO. Host a study consultation before next APF and at the next APF present the study to CSO/NGOs ie one year process (Nov 2018 – Oct 2019). ASEC can assist in this process.

Recommendations 2: Undertake a collecting of grassroots case studies of community based projects on the ground of local people taking action in building alternative people economy. We have shown this is not a difficult process by highlights 4 case studies. We can gather 100 case studies of ground action in 10 ASEAN countries – 10 per country x 10 = 100 stories from the ground on how ordinary people are challenging big business with their alternative socio economic model based on community solidarity.

ASEC can provide the framework and help document the stories and travel to all 10 ASEAN countries (between Nov 2018 & Oct 2019). Bring a publication and stories based on web based by Nov 2019

Prepared by Denison Jayasooria in consultation with ASEC team at APF 2018

Email contact: denisonasec@gmail.com Nov 4, 2018