

ASEC team at Asian People's Forum 2018

Advocating Transformative Economies through SSE & SDGs

The seven member team of Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC) participated at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF) 2018, held at the Singapore Polytechnic Graduates Guild (SPGG) on November 2-4, 2018. The ASEC team comprised of Dr Ben Quinones (Philippines), Dr Eri Trinurini & Chandra Firmantoko (Indonesia), Dr. Boonsom Namsomboon & Daodol Rummamol (Thailand), and Kon Onn Sein & Dr Denison Jayasooria (Malaysia)

The ACSC/APF is an annual gathering of CSOs in ASEAN interfacing with the ASEAN Summit. The 2018 gathering was hosted by Singapore with over 250 people participating.

Plenary Sharing at APF

Dr Ben Quinones and Dr Denison Jayasooria were speakers at the Nov 2 (Day 1) plenary session. Denison highlighted the Sustainable Development Goals-(SDGs) of the UN 2030 agenda as well as the ASEAN community vision of 2025, drawing complementarities between the two and lessons therefrom. Ben presented the five strategic dimensions of SSE that make it highly suitable as a bottom-up, community-based development model for achieving the SDGs, as contrasted to the top-bottom approach of the public (government) sector. The five strategic dimensions are: socially responsible governance (of, by and for the people), the triple bottom lines (people, planet/environment, profit), and edifying ethical values. Ben and Denison briefly elaborated on the rich experiences of community-based SSE enterprises in ASEAN countries that provide concrete evidence to their usefulness as a tool for realising the holistic SDG goals of 2030 agenda.

Workshop Sharing at APF

To provide a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of SSE experiences in ASEAN, the ASEC Team hosted a workshop on November 3, 2018 (Day 2) on the theme "Transformative Economic Movements at the ASEAN Grassroots: Hope & Inclusion". About thirty people participated in the workshop held from 11am to 1pm at ACSC/APF 2018 in SPGG.

Five presentations were made. Denison presented an overview of SDGs, SSE & ASEAN community vision. This was followed by the presentation of four case studies which highlighted country specific SSE experiences.

Kon Onn Sein presented a case study from Malaysia about a group of nomadic forest based indigenous people (IP) who, through the SSE transformative economic approach, were transformed from hunters & gatherers to organic vegetable farmers. The case demonstrated how the SSE transformative economic approach enabled the IP community to contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Dr. Boonsom presented a case from the informal sector, highlighting the solidarity movement of street vendors in Bangkok. The street vendors organised themselves for purposes of

advancing and developing their business enterprises, while at the same time they exercised their citizenship human rights in staging a street demonstration to protect their rights to undertake business activities from corrupt practices and harassment of local city enforcement officials.

Dr. Eri Trinurini of Indonesia presented Bina Swadaya's Village Revitalisation Program which sought to mitigate rural-urban migrations as well as migration to other countries as low skilled workers. The Village Economy fostered by Bina Swadaya's Village Revitalisation Program is an advance model of community-based SSE that involves the entire village population in an integrated socio-economic transformative enterprise.

Dr. Ben Quinones presented the case of landless poor peasants in Isabela province in the Philippines who pooled their own resources and embarked on organic agriculture which enabled them to improve and expand their household enterprises, contribute to greening of the local economy, create decent jobs for people in the community, and link the informal to the formal economy. The case also highlighted how the community-based SSE initiative contributed to SDG goals.

We concluded the workshop with a note on the challenges and solutions needed in advancing community-based SSE enterprises for achieving the SDGs. ASEC recommended to the ACSC/APF Organizing Committee that ASEAN CSO/NGOs undertake a mapping exercise of community-based SSE initiatives in ASEAN countries with an evaluation of how they contribute to achieving the SDGs. We also called for the documentation of grassroots initiatives, with the narratives not just focusing on a description of human rights violations but taking cognisance as well of local solutions undertaken by the local people in addressing their economic, social & cultural rights as well as their civil & political rights.

Written by Denison Jayasooria, Chair of ASEC. (Nov 4, 2018)