



## **Introduction to ASEC Philippines and its Social Solidarity Economy program**

### **WHAT IS THE ASIAN SOLIDARITY ECONOMY COUNCIL (ASEC)-Philippines**

*Legal status:* ASEC Philippines is registered as a non-profit organization with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Philippines. Its establishment was unanimously approved by the General Assembly of partner organizations during the Asian Solidarity Economy Forum- Philippines held in Angeles city, Pampanga in October 2012. ASEC-Philippines is a 'chapter' and focal point in the Philippines of RIPESS Asia/ASEC – the latter being the continental network of RIPESS in Asia.

*Mission:* To promote SSE as a means of developing “bottom-up” inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities in the Philippines.

*Activities:* ASEC Philippines promotes SSE by organizing roundtable discussions, workshops, seminars, conferences, and training courses. It has also inspired the formation of the Young Entrepreneurs for Solidarity Economy (YESE) Cooperative, a cooperative of young professionals largely composed of scholars of APPEND (a partner organization of ASEC-Philippines).

*Board of Trustees (2014-2015):*

**Brigido Simon, Jr.** Chairman (President of Bumbaran Development Corp, a development company specializing in constructing low-cost housing units for low-income workers)

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Sustainable Development Cooperatives, a cooperative federation of over 100 cooperatives and membership based organizations expressly adopting Social Solidarity Economy as its institutional vision)

**Dr. Rosalinda Ofreneo** Board Member (Professor & former Dean, U.P. College of Social

Work & Community Development. The U.P. CSWCD is a constant partner of ASEC-Philippines in the promotion of SSE through workshops, seminars, forums, and training courses)

**Alejandro “Butch” Lukban** Board Member (Executive Director, Global PRO Multipurpose Cooperative, a workers cooperative that advocates for labor rights and the development rights of Overseas Filipino Workers)

**Dr. Cielito Habito**, Board Member (former Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning and Director General of National Economic Development Authority; Professor, Department of Economics, Ateneo de Manila University)

**Dr. Benjamin Quiñones Jr.** Ex-officio member & President (Chairman of RIPESS Asia, the continental network of RIPESS in Asia, with chapters/focal points in several Asian countries)

### **Promoting social & solidarity economy: the experience of ASEC-Philippines**

Since 2007, the Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC)<sup>1</sup> facilitated country-to-country peer cooperation in promoting social solidarity economy through the Solidarity Economy Learning Journey project partially funded by the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation for Human Development (FPH) during the first three years of the organization's operations. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) also provided funding support during the first two years of the project. The project supported the conduct of case studies in Asian countries and the experience sharing and information dissemination conducted through the Asian Solidarity Economy Forum as well as through post-forum workshops, conferences and roundtable discussions at the country level. In addition to FPH and CIDA, most of the projects featured in the case studies received financial and technical assistance in peer-to-peer learning from Southern regional networks actively engaged in development cooperation in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

An important principle that guided the case studies is that South-south and triangular cooperation typically emerges out of *socio-economic demand*. The more specific the socio-economic demand is, the greater is the precision of partnership focus. On such basis the *shared interest* of would-be partners is built.

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<sup>1</sup> Hitherto registered with the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) as the Coalition of Socially Responsible SMEs in Asia in 2004, and re-registered as “Asian Solidarity Economy Council” (Philippines) in February 2013.

<sup>2</sup> This includes the Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources, Appropriate Technology India, Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), British Council Korea (South Korea), Gifu World Youth (Japan), Homenet Southeast Asia, Indian Social Institute, Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme for South and Southeast Asia, Shanti Volunteer Association (Japan), Southeast Asia Rural Social Leadership Institute (Philippines), Pacific Asia Resource Center (Japan), and Work Together Foundation (South Korea).

Shared interest motivates the emerging partners to engage in constant *dialogue* and further to forge *solidarity* among themselves in order to undertake collective action meant to address the demand. Socio-economic demand, shared interest, social dialogue, and manifestation of solidarity are among the basic elements of South-south and triangular cooperation.

The formation of the Asian Solidarity Economy Council brought to a new level the country-to-country peer cooperation on social solidarity economy carried out by ASEC-Philippines partner networks. The outcomes of such country-to-country peer cooperation include:

- (1) a compilation of studies on social solidarity economy practices in Asian countries, currently used as references for research, training, roundtable discussions, and exchange visits with partner organizations of RIPESS Asia and other international organizations;
- (2) broader knowledge and greater understanding of the concept and practice of social solidarity economy;
- (3) facilitation of roundtable discussions on social solidarity economy among partner organizations and allied organizations of ASEC-Philippines.
- (4) design and implementation of producer-consumer solidarity projects (i.e. value chains of solidarity-based community enterprises) in various parts of the Philippines; and
- (5) design and conduct of training course on social solidarity economy for capacity building of partner organizations.

### **WHAT IS SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (SSE)?**

SSE is generally understood by practitioners as a chain of economic activities of organized groups of ordinary people to fight “conditions of poverty” and to achieve an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economy. The chain of economic activities is no different from that of the mainstream economy - it includes production, assembly and transport of products, marketing, financing, and consumption. The difference with the mainstream economy is that the SSE value chain is developed by organized groups of ordinary people. The membership-based organizations involved may include cooperatives, associations, clubs, unions, or informal self-help groups. These are composed of people working together to advance their socio-economic well being. They operate and manage solidarity-based community enterprises as a vehicle for mobilizing resources and collective action to deal with their problems and achieve their goals.

SSE creates a space for a ‘bottom-up’ economic development model to develop and grow. In this space, the way out of poverty consists of two inter-related paths: the short-term course of enabling people to have access to resources that are needed for overcoming poverty, and the longer-term course of developing an economy that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

In developing SSE, there are *helping professional organizations* that normally work with membership-based organizations, and they possess the financial means, knowledge, and knowhow in accessing productive resources. They may consist of civil society organizations, NGOs, faith-based organizations, shareholding social enterprises, for-profit private companies with CSR agenda, and government agencies. The process of developing SSE, therefore, involves solidarity & cooperation and concerted action on *common but differential responsibilities*. In the transition to the new socio-economic space of SSE, the poor and socially marginalized create jobs and employment for themselves through the operation and management of solidarity-based community enterprises, which in turn creates jobs for the educated and skilled workers and professionals employed by helping professional organizations. In effect, SSE links the informal to the formal sector in a manner that builds up both sectors. Thus, the development of SSE diversifies the country's economy and opens greater possibilities for creating and nurturing decent work.

*Social dialogue* is a key instrument for building partnerships among individuals comprising the membership-based organization, as well as between the membership-based organization and the helping organizations. Social dialogue helps build interpersonal trust among people. It is a primary ingredient for generating social cohesion and the formation of social capital. There are membership-based organizations that promote the transformation of individual members from being *self-centered* to being *socially responsible*. These are the ones who will sustain the development of SSE.