

# Fostering the entrepreneurial spirit in Thailand



With access to training in IT systems and better business practices, HP's Community Enterprise Support Project is helping Thai SMEs increase their revenues and stimulate local economies.

In working class and underserved areas throughout Thailand, SMEs are the backbone of the community. Their successes, as well as their failures, have a huge impact on local communities – from invaluable employment opportunities to the stimulation of associated local businesses. However for many SME owners, training to improve their business skills is a luxury often sacrificed for the day-to-day pressures of keeping their businesses running.

In recognition of this, in 2007 Hewlett-Packard (HP), the Education Development Centre (EDC) and the Institute of Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ISMED) developed the Community Enterprise Support Project (CESP) to support economic growth and entrepreneurship among SMEs in Bangkok.

Participants in the CESP learn how to better handle business challenges, set and achieve business goals, define a business strategy, expand their operations and use IT to run their businesses more efficiently. Specifically, they are trained in basic accounting, financial management, marketing, IT and human resources.

Entrepreneurs also participate in the Smart Technology for a Smarter Business (STSB) curriculum focused on developing Information Communications Technology (ICT) knowledge and skills for business operations.

Yupaporn Boontid, Project Coordinator at the EDC says that one of the core goals of the CESP is to provide micro-entrepreneurs with skills and knowledge that they can directly apply to the every-day challenges facing their businesses.



*"We hope that by attending practical training sessions on ICT and business development, SME owners will be empowered with knowledge and skills to improve the efficiency of their business operations and generate growth for their businesses and local communities," she says.*

The CESP is part of HP's greater global commitment to micro-enterprise through the HP Entrepreneurship Learning Program (HELP). One of the world's fastest growing business segments, micro-enterprises typically have limited access to business resources and expertise. The program aims to support these entrepreneurs by providing access to IT and other business tools to help generate income either through the creation of new businesses or the growth of existing ones.

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*“When you see the experiences of entrepreneurs involved in the CESP you understand the potential that corporate social investment has in helping communities, particularly those facing substantial economic challenges,” said Pete Ekstedt, HP Global Citizenship Manager, HP Asia-Pacific & Japan.*

*“Not only are participants given the opportunity to significantly develop their business, their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit has a flow-on effect that benefits many others within the local community.”*

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### **Providing a roadmap for business growth**

The CESP has been a tremendous success, with surveys highlighting participants’ increased knowledge of business practices and subsequent commitment to developing short-term and long-term business plans. More specifically, some businesses have increased their revenue, tripling and in a few cases, quadrupling their profits.

After participating in CESP in 2007, Siripattana Sangduan who owns a micro-enterprise specialising in dipping sauce called Ying Heng Premium Satay, used his training to increase revenue from roughly US\$850 per month to US\$17,000 per month.

He overhauled his parents’ traditional business and applied technology to manage his cash flow. Siripattana also modified the dipping sauce packaging to better fit customer behaviour and opened kiosks in a new market segment - department stores.

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*“I learnt how to do a business plan which changed the way I run my business entirely,” he says.*

*“I focused on my product’s strengths and redesigned it to fit my clients’ needs. I also received advice on how to expand my business in a more strategic way.”*

*“We opened up three stores in shopping malls around Bangkok and I also temporarily displayed my products at an exhibition booth in Siam Paragon which is a leading high-end department store in Thailand. I found that the knowledge I gained about operations and management, product development and packaging definitely assisted in the growth of my business.”*

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The CESP had a similar positive impact on Ms. Suwanna Onwattana, owner of Silver Palm Dog Clothing.

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*“Before CESP training, I never used to plan ahead,” she says.*

*“I never wrote down business-related expenses or my revenues. Now, every day I sit down and do my accounting. I even file taxes which I didn’t do before. Business planning has enabled me to do things correctly and has given me better oversight of my business.”*

*“Currently, my Dog Clothing business can barely meet customer demands and we produce 3,600 dog clothes per day, and almost twice as much during the holiday season.”*

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### **A new hub heightens IT access**

To provide program participants with access to IT equipment as part of the CESP, two the Non-Formal Education (NFE) computer centres have been established at Bangkoknoi and Dusit – becoming a core asset for the communities. The centres provide an invaluable resource for participants and locals alike, to use the internet, gain a better understanding of various software applications and generally further their IT knowledge. Since opening

in March 2007, the Bangkoknoi centre alone has seen nearly 500 community members register with the NFE.

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*“The HP-supported Bangkoknoi NFE centre – which includes desktop computers, printers, laptop and 24 hour high-speed internet access – has been beneficial to both the CESP participants and other people in the surrounding community,” says Warasaya Na Songkhla, Project Manager from ISMED.*

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*“Using the NFE centre, they can access software tools for their businesses, creating brochures, using the internet to find information and checking e-mails.”*

One CESP participant who has made great use of the Bangkoknoi NFE centre is Mr Nakorn from manufacturer Nakorn Cowboy, a participant in CESP in 2008. He says that computer training is a real asset for business owners like himself.

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*“Having more training on using computers will help to me to facilitate communication with buyers outside of Bangkok. For example, I can show my items online at SME web portals such as [www.smebangkok.com](http://www.smebangkok.com)” he says.*

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*“The program also provided knowledge and training on new and interesting designs and I’m now able to sell more of these products. A study trip with the CESP also motivated me to sell the products to a new market. Right now my products are very popular, and I am selling retail to new buyers in provinces such as Samutsakorn, Nakon Pathom, and Ratchabur,” he added.*

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### **Investing in local communities: the HP Entrepreneurship Learning Program**

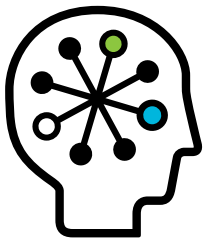
Of course the CESP is just one of many recipients of HELP (formerly know as Micro-Enterprise Development Program), which in Asia-Pacific provides annual grants of technology, cash and training curriculum. Specifically, Grants are provided to local non-profit Micro Enterprise Development Centres (MEDCs), which then provide access to IT for local entrepreneurs. While the MEDCs receive the actual grant, it is HP’s goal to use these organisations as a vehicle to reach out to the broader community.

In 2008, HP awarded 23 of these grants from countries as diverse as India, China, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia, to provide start-up assistance, business training and advice to entrepreneurs and very small businesses.

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*“It is our hope that programs such as this will help provide sustainable solutions, to positively impact unemployment and the economic wellbeing of communities around the region, well into the future,” Pete added.*

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