

Press release

12 October 2018

## **Maybank Foundation expands silk weaving centre in Laos**

Maybank Foundation has expanded its Maybank Women Eco-Weavers centre in Laos with the addition of a hostel for the women who are being trained in this traditional skill.

The construction of the weaving centre, located in the Xiangkhouang Province of Laos, some 386 kilometres away from Vientiane, began in January this year as part of Maybank Foundation's breakthrough initiative, a first-of-a-kind regional programme which provides business opportunities and empowers underprivileged women weavers and mulberry farmers to become financially independent.

The setting up of this new hostel is to address the transportation and geographical problems faced by the trainees, some of whom have to travel for up to two days to reach the farm to attend the 15-day on-site training programme. The hostel will be able to accommodate 20 trainees at any one time and also comes with a meeting room for use during their training session.

The launch of the hostel was officiated by Datuk Mohaiyani Shamsudin, Chairman of Maybank and Maybank Foundation and Madam Kommaly Chantavong, founder of Mulberries, a social enterprise which is Maybank Foundation's partner in Laos. It was held at the Mulberries Farm in Xiangkhouang Province, a flat but high plateau in the mountainous north-east of Laos.

Also present at the launch were Bounhom Thepthani, Cabinet Deputy of the Governor's Office, Xiengkhouang Province; Sivilay Sengchalern, Paek District Governor, Xiengkhouang Province; Visone Xaysongkham, Head of the Bank of Lao PDR, North Branch, Xiengkhouang Province; Johan Arief Jaafar, First Secretary of the Malaysian Embassy and Colonel Mohd Mahmud Ahmad, Defence Attaché, Embassy of Malaysia as well as Shahril Azuar Jimin, the CEO of Maybank Foundation.

Speaking at the event, Datuk Mohaiyani said, "I am pleased to see how we have developed ever since we started this programme in 2016, beginning in Cambodia and then Indonesia. The Maybank Women Eco-Weavers initiative is not only exceptional in its objective to preserve, sustain and promote traditional textile making techniques highlighting the ASEAN identity but also to help disadvantaged women achieve economic independence which is in line with our mission to humanise financial services."

“Another unique feature of this programme is that it is designed to also support the ecosystem of textile weaving, including by supporting small farming families by growing mulberry trees, in which the leaves are essential for silk worm rearing,” Datuk Mohaiyani added.

Meanwhile, Shahril said that through the training, capacity building and production-related financial incentives, these women are given the opportunity to help themselves and their families become economically stable and financially inclusive.

“To further demonstrate our seriousness in ensuring the sustainability and continuity of this programme as well as the empowerment of these women weavers, Maybank Foundation has not only provided financial aid to support the project but also invested time and effort to ensure the rigorous training is beneficial in the development of the women weavers. This is to ensure that they can continue to create a financially conducive environment for their dependents in hopes of continuing with their livelihoods in this challenging environment.”

The Maybank Women Eco-Weavers programme was launched in 2016 and is currently running in three countries namely Cambodia, Indonesia and Laos. To date, this programme has successfully trained a total of 345 women providing them with an average monthly income between USD100 to USD240. Maybank hopes to also expand the programme soon in Malaysia.

The Maybank Women Eco-Weavers programme aims to help sustain local heritage and culture, build the capacity of new weavers and promote traditional textiles globally in a sustainable manner. The programme is endorsed by the ASEAN Foundation and showcases Maybank Foundation’s role towards a more inclusive ASEAN, by strengthening women’s empowerment and gender equality in the region, to support the ASEAN Community Vision 2025

Maybank Foundation is the corporate responsibility arm of the Maybank Group, which seeks to positively impact communities in markets that Maybank operates. The Foundation’s programmes are focused on six key pillars which are Education, Community Empowerment, Healthy Living, Arts & Culture, Environmental Diversity and Disaster Relief.

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