



BACKGROUND NOTE

Real-Life Entrepreneurs

Yuho Myoda

DISCLAIMER

This background paper was prepared for the report *Asian Development Outlook 2022 Update: Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age*. It is made available here to communicate the results of the underlying research work with the least possible delay. The manuscript of this paper therefore has not been prepared in accordance with the procedures appropriate to formally-edited texts.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this document and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by ADB in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

Any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area, or use of the term “country” in this document, is not intended to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area. Boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this document do not imply any judgment on the part of the ADB concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

Real-Life Entrepreneurs

Yuho Myoda
Asian Development Bank

A. Female Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality

Vanessa Paranjothy, co-founder of Freedom Cups

When she heard about the menstrual cup from her friend, “It just clicked my head”. Vanessa remembers the moment she got inspiration for her business, Freedom Cups, an enterprise she found with her two sisters, which sells and distributes menstruation cup. She thought “There is a better solution, and it just requires a bit of creativity to figure out how we can get this out”. Freedom Cups now works in buy-one give-one model because they believe there are many women in need of help. Freedom Cups is beneficial in three aspects: it is inexpensive, reusable, and less harmful to women’s body.

It is an important feature that the menstrual cup is a more affordable option because there are significant numbers of women not only in developing countries but also in developed world. And that is why they keep it inexpensive as well as provide buy-one give-one model. According to them, it endures for 10 years in average, which should spare lots of expense if women had to purchase the conventional disposable sanitary kits every month. At the same time, its durability and reusability help environmental problems significantly. Based on their survey, some women in developing countries burn the used sanitary kits to avoid it being exposed by chance, which may lead to soil and water pollution. Obviously, without talking about this story, using the cup will reduce the disposals by huge amount. Last, since it is free of allergic chemicals and can be cleaner options for most women, it is a better choice for a woman’s body.

Through their projects all over the world, they realized the further needs for physical education to women even in developed countries, and so they are also facilitating the workshops today. Menstruation management may be a critical hindrance in achieving gender equality. Considerable numbers of women are still forced to be absent from school or work, which deprives them of educational or earning opportunities that contribute to women empowerment. With the proper access to a menstrual management tool, girls do not have to miss their school anymore. Vanessa says “When you see smiles on people’s faces whose lives you have changed, I think that sets my soul on fire.”

<https://worldprojects.columbia.edu/node/293>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/07/freedom-cup/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaqMivEFg8M>

<https://www.freedomcups.org/>

B. Entrepreneurship and Other Dimensions of Social Development

Dysmus Kisilu, founder of Solar Freeze, an enterprise of mobile cold storage units powered by renewable energy

Dysmus Kisilu is the founder of Solar Freeze, an enterprise that offers an affordable and clean storage solution to smallholders in Kenya. He started his business to support hardworking smallholder farmers who have been exploited for many years. Because of Kenya's harsh weather, significant amounts of produce were wasted without proper access to storage with temperature control. And with the fear of significant loss in case their produce perishes, smallholder farmers had little bargaining power with middlemen in the distribution network and thus had no choice but to accept the dirt-cheap prices for their labor. He wanted to change the situation with the power of technology.

He introduced an innovative solution to the smallholder farmers in Kenya. Solar Freeze offers portable cooling storage units powered by renewable energy with pay-as-you-store payment structure. Their service is available for even a smallholder farmer in an off-grid village because they provide pay-as-you-store service and because their cooling units are portable and working off-grid with renewable energy. Not simply offering the storage service, they are also trying to connect the farmers with better buyers through information and communication technology tools. Solar Freeze is a solution to the multiple issues that farmers in developing countries are facing, such as unreasonably low income and lack of access to renewable energies.

Their business may have further contributions to sustainable growth in a greater scale. By providing their solar-powered cold storage units and irrigation kits to women in rural areas, the firm contributed to increasing the farm produce significantly. He also co-founded an initiative to develop the next generation of leaders in renewable energy and smart agriculture. He says "I visualize the future where a new generation of young Africans leads climate-smart initiatives. So we have a huge task on our hands and I think we are up to it."

<https://d-lab.mit.edu/about/people/dysmus-kisilu>

<https://www.solarfreeze.co.ke/story/>

<https://www.afrik21.africa/en/kenya-dysmus-kisilu-increases-agricultural-yields-with-solar-energy/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj2gkvBbQQA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw04meellho>