

“Chiew Share” Project

In recent years, the phenomenon, known as an “aging society,” has for the first time grasped the public attention in Thai society. Due to the rapidly increasing number of elderly populations, there have been growing concerns over its economic as well as social consequences. Even though in the past few decades we have seen a gradual change in Thai population structure, not until the year 2040 will the distinct change appear. It is estimated that in 20 years the number of elderly populations, specifically those aged over 60 years, will account for up to 32.1 percent of the total population; meanwhile, the number of working population will fall from 64.1 percent to only 55.1 percent. This shift in the age structure poses a major challenge for Thai government on whether they can successfully maintain a sustainable economy and society, due to the decrease in public revenue from the decline of the working population coupled with the higher governmental expenditures from providing adequate social welfare for senior citizens. Even though population with the age over 60 years are marked as seniors according to the state and oftentimes reach retirement, it does not necessarily mean that they are no longer capable of working. It is important to note that the criteria, which has been used to categorize aged citizens, was based on the 1960s social context, when the average life expectancy in Thailand was as low as 63 years. Nonetheless, with the advancement in medical technology and the increased accessibility of the healthcare sector, the current average life expectancy reaches approximately 77 years in 2020. The ongoing usage of this outdated data not only misleads the public but also limits the opportunities of Thai senior citizens to utilize their potentials and skills, which can further benefit the economy and the society. Therefore, as Thailand is approaching the era of the aging society, the promotion of post-retirement job opportunities can be an effective measure to both sustain the economy and develop a more inclusive society for Thai elders.

As an attempt to promote job opportunities for elder population and uplift their social dignity, the project “เชี้ยวแชร์” (Chiew-Share) was initiated. The name “Chiew Share” is derived from the combination of two terms: “Chiew,” which refers to an expertise in Thai language, as well as the term “share.” As both of these terms suggest, the project concerns the process of expertise sharing from Thai senior citizens to younger generations. Chiew Share is in fact a sub-project of a larger project, called “ชาญฉลาด” (Chan-Chala), which aims to enhance the quality of life of elderly population in different areas. The Chiew Share project, in particular, emphasizes on how senior citizens can further utilize and share their expertise and skills, which have been enriched throughout their lives. Owing to the age restriction, a number of Thai senior citizens are forced into retirement, despite possessing such valuable expertise and competent skills. Therefore, in order to reinvest these intellectual assets, ensure a sustainable economy during the aging society era, as well as create an inclusive place in Thai workforce simultaneously, providing opportunities for the seniors to share their expertise and skills to younger generations is the

utmost goal of the Chiew Share project. There are two main aspects in which the project aims to encompass: the initiation of practical activities and the conduct of research.

In terms of initiating practical activities for the retired elders, the Chiew Share project plans to create and promote economic activities as well as a digital platform where aged citizens can engage. Taking into consideration the shift in socio-economic environment in recent years, the Chiew Share project has been designed to fit the trend. In the contemporary era, it is undeniable that there has been a massive rise of the platform economy as a new global trend, making digital platforms an important tool, especially in a business arena. In Thailand, numerous sectors, for instance businesses and education, also have taken advantage of this newly-emerging trend and have become digitalized. Arguably, the rise of the platform economy is a major challenge for senior citizens in participating and competing in Thai markets, due to their lack of familiarity and knowledge. Therefore, to promote sustainable job opportunities in this new economic environment, the Chiew Share project encourages the use of technologies and innovation as major tools for seniors to pass down their expertise, through the creation and the provision of necessary knowledge, particularly digital literacy. Apart from promoting digital awareness, an online platform will be designed and launched to the public, in order to generate jobs for elders. Seizing the advantage of modern-day technology, the platform will serve as a tool in which seniors can conduct their own online workshops and ordinary people can join sessions based on personal interests. However, we still take into consideration that even with high expertise and skills, some groups of elders may still lack the ability to design effective teaching methods and tools. To reverse this setback, the project relies on the support of those in the media and the educational field to collaborate with these elders in designing and creating online workshops. Additionally, the function of the online platform is not limited to expertise sharing but it also encompasses a feature which connects and matches entrepreneurs with job seekers. This secondary function particularly concerns the informal sector, which is a fundamental aspect of Thai economy. We believe that the platform will widen the opportunities for elderly workers in the informal sector to continue working during retirement based on their will, which in turn will promote self-reliance through extra income.

In addition to this, the Chiew Share project aims to generate vital information through the conduct of research. As a researched-based organization, we believe in the creation of information and knowledge as a crucial aspect in the sustainable development of society. With the collaboration of scholars and researchers from various institutions in Thailand, the Chiew Share project will include the conduct of research covering a wide range of topics, such as the incentives for employers to hire more retired workers and the effective measures that the government can initiate to support the post-retiree employment. Based on the project's activities, such as the expertise sharing and the job matching, a survey report will be conducted,

in order to harvest necessary information, which will enrich our understanding in regard to the topic of aging employment in Thailand, especially in the area of the informal sector. Furthermore, the project also aims to conduct policy research and propose policy recommendations on the aging employment, which will be useful for both the public and the private sectors in promoting employment for senior citizens in the long run. All of the information acquired from the research would be published and distributed to both the general public and policy-making institutions, in the hope that they would further utilize this resource in initiating and developing useful policies supporting employment along with the well-being of Thai elders.