

Banpu Supports “Karen Design”, a Social Enterprise Using “Karen Crafts” to Address “Forest Burning and Community Income Disparity”

Karen Design is one of three social enterprises awarded funding in the 13th Banpu Champions for Change (BC4C) program

High on the mountains of Mae Hong Son province, the Mae Tho Noi community is home to the Karen ethnic group, who rely on corn farming as their main source of income. However, they are currently facing economic and environmental issues. Traditional corn farming methods cannot ensure income stability for the community, and the annual burning of agricultural fields leads to severe PM 2.5 air pollution.

Amidst these challenges, the Karen people's way of life and traditional weaving knowledge have become a new source of inspiration for creating additional income for families. This inspiration led siblings **Jeeraphan** and **Chunnawan Boonma**, founders of the social enterprise “**Karen Design**,” to integrate the unique cultural heritage of the Karen people with contemporary design. Their efforts have resulted in two distinct styles of craftwork that beautifully combine tradition and modernity.

Traditional Karen woven fashion has been transformed into modern, everyday wearable pieces, blending tradition with contemporary style. Additionally, “corn husk lamps” are crafted from agricultural waste, turning discarded materials into unique and culturally inspired creations. After participating in the 13th year of the “**Banpu Champions for Change**” (BC4C), a program organized by **Banpu Public Company Limited** and the **ChangeFusion Institute**, the two siblings applied the two siblings leveraged their newfound knowledge to generate a six-figure revenue and significantly expand income distribution within their community within less than one year.

- **Creating “New Livelihoods” with “Karen Crafts”**

Jeeraphan and **Chunnawan Boonma**, the siblings behind **Karen Design**, explain the origins of their venture, stating, “**Karen Design** was established from the economic struggles of the Mae Tho Noi community in Mae Hong Son province, where the main livelihood options were limited to cultivating corn and other grains on the mountain slopes. The community faced difficulties in accessing basic resources, such as no electricity during the rainy season, unstable phone signals, and challenging transportation due to the remote location. However, the desire for

change in our village motivated us to look for new opportunities. We decided to revive the often-overlooked traditional craft of Karen weaving and adapt it to the modern lifestyle, making it suitable for daily wear, rather than only for important ceremonies like weddings. Recognizing this potential, we expanded our network by forming a collective of local women artisans, offering a wider range of products such as shirts, dresses, bags, and more. Additionally, we created added value by transforming agricultural waste, like corn husks, into modern, minimalist-style decorative lamps, appealing to those who love decorating their homes with natural materials."

- **Generating a “Six-Figure Revenue” Through “Knowledge and Funding” from the Banpu Champions for Change Program**

"Participating in the Banpu Champions for Change program provided us with invaluable opportunities and inspiration from fellow social entrepreneurs, senior mentors, the advisory committee, and expert consultants, all of whom provided close guidance. This support helped us solidify our business strategy and set clearer goals. We began by calculating costs, determining appropriate pricing, and carefully studying customer behavior and demand. With the THB 80,000 grant from the program, we focused on online sales, especially through TikTok, which proved to be an effective way to quickly reach our target customers. This approach led to nearly THB 250,000 in total sales across both product categories. We received more than 200 orders for Karen woven garments, generating between THB 2,000 and THB 5,000 in monthly income for community members. Additionally, more than 80 corn husk lamps were ordered, providing an average monthly income of THB 1,500 per person," added **Jeeraphan**.

- **Converting “Half of Cornfields” to “Fruit Trees and Other Cash Crops” for Sustainability**

Karen Design focuses not only on community economic development but also on environmental restoration. The initiative encourages villagers to reduce corn cultivation and replace it with fruit trees, other economic crops, and native tree species. To date, the community has managed to reduce corn farming by more than 50%, converting approximately 195 rai out of 390 rai of land. This shift helps decrease the practice of burning forest, promotes agricultural diversity, and contributes to a more sustainable future. Additionally, Karen Design plans to expand its production to other communities in response to growing demand. Importantly, the THB 250,000 grant received as one of the three winners of the BC4C program has been used to improve their production system, ensuring continuous income generation for community members.

- **Banpu Fosters the Next Generation of Social Entrepreneurs**

- Banpu Fosters the Next Generation of Social Entrepreneurs

Rattapon Sukhunthee, Head of Corporate Communications at Banpu Public Company Limited, shared thoughts on the BC4C program, stating that " At Banpu, we admire the passion



of social entrepreneurs dedicated to environmental protection and leading their communities toward sustainable development. Karen Design demonstrates remarkable determination and resilience, effectively leveraging the skills learned from the program to enhance their business model and create a tangible impact, supported by clear metrics. We hope that Karen Design inspires other aspiring social entrepreneurs. Banpu remains committed to strengthening Thailand's social enterprise ecosystem in partnership with our network, and we will soon be accepting applications for the 14th year of the BC4C program in 2025. Interested social entrepreneurs can follow the Banpu Champions for Change page for updates.”

Interested in Karen Design products? Find them on:

TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@kate_je24?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076218292843>

Stay updated on the Banpu Champions for Change (BC4C) program and the application process for its 14th year in 2025 by following the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/banpuchampions/>

###

About Banpu

Banpu Public Company Limited is a leading versatile energy provider, operating 3 core groups of businesses – energy resources, energy generation, and energy technology in Thailand, Indonesia, China, Australia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Japan, the United States of America and Vietnam. The Company is committed to developing sustainable energy solutions, balancing the Energy Trilemma while striving to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050.

Media Contact:

Corporate Communications Team, Banpu Public Company Limited

Kamolwan Chiamudom	093-923-6355	kamolwan_c@banpu.co.th
Chattida Veerakul	099-104-4999	chattida_v@banpu.co.th

Ogilvy Thailand

Eakkapop Panthurat	061-154-4616	eakkapop.panthurat@ogilvy.com
Jitthiwat Ratchakhom (Gob)	06-2614-5692	jitthiwat.ratchakhom@ogilvy.com