

Women entrepreneurs shine

Fabled throughout history for its abundance of precious metals and costly jewels, Asia is now playing an increasing role in the less expensive costume jewelry sector. As hip young designers bring a fresh eye to sometimes whimsical, sometimes practical accessories, it appears that small entrepreneurs can play a major role in this relatively new market. Women entrepreneurs may have both a special interest in and aptitude for the costume jewelry business. APO projects specifically for female entrepreneurs were initiated in 2000 when assistance was sought from the Development Academy of the Philippines' Productivity and Development Center to develop course content. Since then, the APO has organized additional projects that assist women in their professional development in the Philippines and Malaysia. Participants in 2005 and 2006 projects in the women's entrepreneurship series suggested that the APO organize one offering training in specific skills such as costume jewelry making.

utilized. Several purchased items for future use in their businesses. They also met with local material suppliers and explored the possibilities of establishing business relationships.

The traditional APO spirit of cooperation played a role in the appreciation the participants expressed for the course. "When a number of ladies including myself failed to complete our work, seven of us adjourned to my hotel room to complete the unfinished work. It was such a relief to work together and having the more skillful ones assisting the weaker ones in getting the work done. You should have seen the joy and satisfaction on our faces when we completed our masterpieces," commented Project Volunteer Tina Tan Sok Cheng, Pasir Panjang Hill Community Services Center, Singapore. Managing Director Amone Phoummasak, Fa Watthana Group, Lao PDR, later wrote to the APO and KPC to say, "I have learned many new skills and techniques from this course. I will extend the knowledge that I have learned to the women of Laos so that they will have more ideas for jewelry making and improve their skills and businesses." 🌀



Participants practice making costume jewelry

Because the Republic of Korea has an international reputation for its costume/fashion jewelry, the APO organized a training course on Income-generating Activities for Women: Costume Jewelry in Seoul, 11–14 September. The local Beadlook Academy and the Korea Productivity Center (KPC) were the implementing organizations. Refreshingly, among the 25 participants from 12 APO member countries, one was a self-financed Cambodian man. The participants represented mainly SMEs and NGOs or associations involved in local handicraft production.

Costume jewelry is made of inexpensive materials such as glass, plastic, and synthetic stones, rather than precious metals and gems. It therefore offers income-generating opportunities for the self-employed, particularly in small trades and services and in microindustries, which describes most working women in the Asia-Pacific region. During the four-day course, more than 60% of which was devoted to hands-on practice, participants attempted bead art including bead looming, wire art following a formatted design, and polymer clay art under the instruction of seven local trainers. They created bracelets, necklaces, and other fashion accessories, with several evolving their own designs.

"The main objective of the project was to equip the participants with the practical skills for costume jewelry design and production which are common in Korea," said Selim Chung of the KPC. During the site visit on the second day to Dongdaemoon Accessories Shops, participants observed trends in the local market for costume jewelry components and how other materials could be