

## **The NSTDA - InWEnt project:**

Major findings, lessons learned and recommendations for future TBIs in Thailand  
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Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is almost 2.5 years ago, when a former InWEnt training measure took place in beautiful Phuket, which was about entrepreneurship support instruments. I was invited to speak about Technology Business Incubators and Science Parks at that time. First draft ideas were discussed between Prof Chachanat and Mr. Kelbling how to support Thailand in the development of TBI.

One year later this project started and EXPERPLAN was lucky to design the project proceedings according to our most considered opinion, that each TBI is a business venture and consequently requires a well elaborated feasibility study and a business plan. We decided to offer a training and coaching project, which followed the recommendations by the UNIDO, an organisation, which has been quite active in incubator development for many years.

The UNIDO has developed a **4-phased approach** of 18 months to set up a TBI; this proved to be a very valuable approach.

- This 4-phased approach **helped the TBI teams here in Thailand:**
  - to understand the needs and requirements of their future clients, creative people with innovative business ideas;
  - to understand how these can be met by a TBI, to see which of the TBIs activities are feasible for which kind of target group;
  - to back the concept for their TBI by two go-decisions: one upon submission of the feasibility study and another one upon submission of the business plan, which is reflecting the TBI model, its functions, its organisation and the financial viability;
  - it helped to see how their TBIs can be embedded into the local environment of existing infrastructures and services for business and innovation support;
  - it helped to become aware of their own role within their universities, science parks and regions: (First) being pro-active promoters of entrepreneurship that are actively reaching out to the local and the science community and contributing to change the entrepreneurial spirit, (Second) becoming pro-active networkers that are linking up with the main stakeholders of innovation within their regions;
- 18 months were fully needed to set up the TBIs in this way. It takes time!!!
- The accompanying **phase-by-phase training programme for capacity building** of the TBI teams and the first incubatees (their customers) was perceived as beneficial in several ways. It consisted of central and several decentrally held trainings, individual coaching for each team, and round table meetings where all 4 TBI teams met at regular intervals together with the trainers.
- Around 540 participants from various organisations and locations in Thailand have participated in 9 central trainings (and total 33 days) which were open to other interested participants.
- The training programme **helped the TBI teams:**
  - in a step-by-step/ phase-by-phase approach with hands-on support to set up the TBIs;
  - at the **level of the individual 41 TBI team members** to become equipped with the methodologies and tools necessary to investigate the feasibility of a TBI and to reflect

- such findings in a business plan backed by a sound financial plan; and to learn how to run a TBI like a business unit;
- at the **organisational level** it helped the 4 TBI teams to become real teams as the whole amount of work could only be managed in team work; they were also advised on how important it is to get the essential backing by their mother organisations and other stakeholders;
  - at the **inter-organisational level**: to develop strong networking links among the 4 TBI teams; the round table meetings were perceived as particularly beneficial in this respect;
  - At the **systems level**, contributions from Thailand were remarkably intense and showed a very strong commitment to promoting TBI and technology-based businesses in the country:
    - the dedication of NSTDA became very visible through its active engagement in the successful implementation of the Thai-German cooperation project, the immediate follow-up if problems occurred, the excellent organisation of all events, the plan to have the TBIs at the universities as nucleus for future science park projects in the North-East and South of Thailand.
  - Initiated by the project, the **networking of the Thai Business Incubators** was accelerated at the systems level jointly by NSTDA, OSMEP – Office for SME Promotion and the CHE – Commission on Higher Education through founding the Thai Business Incubators and Science & Technology Parks Network/ Association (Thai BISPA)
  - **A core of very dedicated TBIs** is now developed that has the ability and the willingness to share its experiences and to serve as “brothers and sisters” to other follow-up TBI projects all over Thailand.
  - **Each TBI supports its first customers.** Through many awareness raising and outreach activities they were scouted and are now supported by the TBIs. For instance more than 80 participants took part in the 4 Regional Business Planning Workshops that were held recently by EXPERPLAN together with the active involvement of the TBI teams in each region.

#### **Recommendations for future TBIs in Thailand:**

- The 4 Pilot TBIs will be key - elements of the newly created Science Parks Networks in the North-East and the South of the country. If the Science Parks are to become sustainable, it will be recommendable not just to focus on the success of the current pilot TBIs, but to **support the development of the other Incubator projects for different target groups and other focus** in these Science Parks as well; I even think about middle- or low-tech Incubators, where SME could do the preliminary works for and facilitate the high tech companies in the Science Parks.
- **We strongly recommend, that also other UBIs**, the existing and future ones should consider to follow such a training cycle as well for them in order to see how they can run the Incubators sustainable.
- However, if such a training cycle would be re-run for the TBI teams of current and future Incubator projects, it would be recommendable to start with a in-depth Training Needs Analysis first.
- Considerable **difference in the follow up training cycle** should be, that experts from outside should rather act more as moderators and supervisors. The major part of the trainings should be prepared and executed by **selected “trainers” from the current TBI projects**. Whenever meaningful the external trainer will execute the training jointly. This would render the trainings more applied to the Thai background and would support the networking between the first TBI and the followers.
- We also recommend the design of an extra training program, which aims to the **identification and the support of would-be entrepreneurs** or as we like to say “Pre-

Incubatees” as it showed, that for some TBI/ UBI projects the identification of clients is difficult task.

- In addition we recommend to develop a transparent **nationwide Incubator program**, which supports the setting up of all kind of incubators based upon a competitive procedure; the successful submission of a FS and BP should be minimum requirements for providing infrastructure and operation grant
- Very important is also **a public funding scheme for technology-based business start ups** (e.g. each TBI could have an own start-up fund to support its incubatees to a limited extent). As this special form of venture capital is extremely risky, we recommend the establishment of a half/ half publicly and privately financed seed financing system in Thailand.

Ladies and gentlemen! Finally and of course of most importance I would very much like to say thank you- Kap Khun Krab - to all those here in the room, which helped our trainers, my staff and me to exercise this project so well.

- Prof. Chachanat, who was always well informed about the progress and smaller setbacks of the project and who always let me feel, that our work is appreciated and welcomed.
- Dr. Langbein, my principal und project manager at InWent, who always had an open ear for necessary adjustments and modifications of the project, which he confirmed fast and un bureaucratic.
- Khun Chaiwat our Thai co-expert, who very well prepared for us all capacity building measures in Bangkok, Isaan and the South but who also taught me in a very nice way to consider more and more Thai style and behaviour and being a bit less German. He always accompanied us on our many trainings and workshop in the country; we never felt alone.
- Dr. Janekrishna, although overloaded with work, I cannot even imagine always found time to monitor and guide the project; it was always a pleasure for me to have him as a partner, who very well understood the elements of the business incubation system.
- All staff from NSTDA and I want to name just a few like Teresa, Saowapap and Kittichai, who spend evenings and weekends to the success of the project
- And finally my special thanks go to the TBI set-teams from the regions, who always welcomed us as good friends, spent evenings with us and made us familiar with the huge variety of excellent Thai food Thai and living culture; Thank you Dr. Supachai, Dr. Sumana, Dr. Rachain, Dr Akkarawit and Dr. Anouchit.

I say bye bye to Thailand with warm heart and good emotions. It was a pleasure to work for you!

Sawee Krap!

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