

Chili growing project in Malaysia

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Komuniti Cakna Terengganu, partner organisation of Malaysian AIDS Council runs a shelter for recovering drug users. The shelter fits in around 25 people. There are no detoxication services and medical treatment for people living in this shelter. They get emotional support from their peers and attend a local mosque for prayers. There is no limit for stay in the shelter; people may leave when they feel they are ready. All outreach workers working for CAHR project in this area used to be the clients of the shelter.



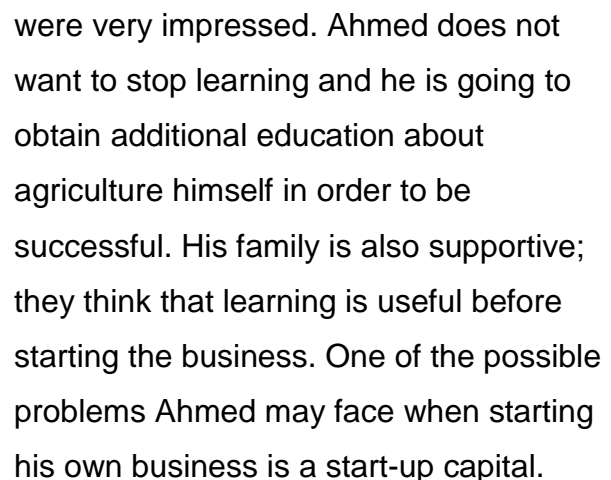
In order to provide the residents of the centre with an opportunity to develop life skills and raise some income, Komuniti Cakna Terengganu started Chili growing project,



funded by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. The provincial HIV officer provides a land for chili plantation for free. In the beginning, people received training on how to grow chili, purchased required equipment and chili seeds. Then the residents of the shelter started the cultivation process and learning from practice.

It seems, the growing process is very easy, but in fact it is not. The plants need constant watering and there is a special schedule developed for watering chili on time. And the plants should be kept from the direct sunlight. People learnt to take care about the plants which in addition to agriculture skills develop their abilities to plan their work, achieve the goals and work as a team.

Ahmed¹, the resident of the shelter shared his experience of growing chili. For him, as for the other people living in the shelter that was the first experience of growing chili. He can develop his skills in agriculture and get some income. Ahmed was taught how to grow chili from the very beginning and learnt about it “from zero to hero”. After the training the agriculture officers came to see the students and gave further advice and recommendation. To their surprise they saw that skills of the residents of the shelter who had an experience of drug use were much better than they expected. The officers



¹ The name was changed in order to protect the identity

There are opportunities to get a loan from the government, though it is not easy. This leads to the conclusion that in order to sustain the idea, the organisation needs to consider further support to people who want to start their business. For example, negotiating with the government and assisting people with the loans.

Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) is one of the key partners in the Dutch funded, Alliance led Community Action on Harm Reduction project (CAHR). CAHR is an ambitious €10 m project spanning five countries (Kenya, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia) that will expand coverage to 180,000 injecting drug users, their partners and children with a wide range of services (HIV prevention, treatment and care, sexual and reproductive health and other services) by 2014.