



LIFE LONG LEARNING AND FUTURE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FOR THAILAND'S SILVER ECONOMY: TALAT PHLU



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thailand is entering a period of rapid population ageing, with a growing share of older adults remaining economically active in informal urban economies. In Bangkok, this is particularly evident in inner-city districts such as Talat Phlu, a historic commercial area where older residents sustain livelihoods through small-scale food vending, services, and informal care work. While these activities remain embedded in local consumption and social life, they operate with thin margins and limited protection, and are increasingly exposed to digital and platform-based market systems that risk excluding older workers and undermining their independence and dignity.

In response, Thammasat Business School (TBS), through its Ageing Business & Care Development (ABCD) Centre, designed and implemented the Ready Senior Project: Life Long Learning and Future Skills Development System for Thailand's Silver Economy. Supported by the National Research Council of Thailand, the project was piloted in Talat Phlu between July 2021 and June 2023 as a community-embedded learning ecosystem rather than a stand-alone training programme. TBS acted primarily as a connector, translator, and credibility provider, linking older informal workers with public agencies, private employers, community organisations, students, and alumni to integrate skills development with real market and service opportunities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONT.)

The intervention embedded learning directly into participants' everyday economic activities, allowing them to continue earning while acquiring new capabilities. Modular, practice-based training was combined with personalised intergenerational coaching and community-based digital platforms. Learning focused on digital commerce, basic financial management, product and service development, and foundational care skills, with delivery prioritising learning-by-doing, peer exchange, and adaptation to individual business and service contexts.

Between 2021 and 2023, 628 participants from 317 informal enterprises and service activities engaged in training, coaching, or platform-based learning linked to the Talat Phlu prototype. Approximately 70 per cent enhanced an existing business or initiated new income-generating activities, with food vendors reporting average income increases of around 30 per cent. The initiative supported the creation or improvement of at least 62 products and services and facilitated more than 200 job matches through community-based digital platforms.

Beyond economic outcomes, the initiative demonstrated that older informal workers respond strongly to learning when it is practical, respectful of prior experience, and immediately applicable to daily work. Participants reported increased confidence, willingness to adopt digital tools, and renewed motivation to adapt their livelihoods, reinforcing continued economic participation as a source of dignity, social contribution, and future orientation in later life. The Talat Phlu prototype offers transferable insights for business schools, employers, and policymakers seeking inclusive workforce development models in ageing societies where conventional corporate Learning & Development (L&D) systems have limited reach.

