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Duskin Leadership Training in Japan 6th trainee

Lin/　Good afternoon everybody. My name is Lin. I am working at Taipei City New Vitality Independent Living Association in Taipei. I will talk about independent living and possible engagement to social business of individuals with disabilities.

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Let me begin with my self-introduction. I was born in Taipei, and I have lived my life with Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) since birth. My bones are very fragile and easy to break. Now I live in Taiwan, using an electric wheelchair and various assistive services. In Taiwan, our barrier-free environment is not adequate, so my family and I had to work very hard to overcome the many challenges I faced. Even after graduating from college, I couldn't find any employment.

Through the internet, however, I learned about the Duskin Leadership Training Program and decided to visit Japan. This program changed my life greatly.

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I was in Taiwan in 2007 with the support of an organization for individuals with disabilities, I launched an organization called the Independent Living Association in Taipei city. In our organization, more than half of the staff are disabled. We go beyond the types of disability and provide various levels of assistance for independent living.

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Of course, we work toward a barrier-free environment, advocate and educate the public on the rights of individuals with disabilities while also protecting those rights. Not only do we cooperate with organizations that deal with the disabled, but also network with women's organizations, the LGBT community, the homeless, and many expert legal groups. We have a very broad-based network. Last year, when things became difficult due to COVID-19, all the restaurants and stores were closed. Through networking with the organizations which support the homeless, we could deliver food and daily commodities to the disabled. I think one of the most attractive points of our independent living movement consists of the linkage between people. This linkage can be the power to change society. We did many things but one big achievement is in 2011, the assistive service that I learned in Japan was included in the national governmental system and in 2014, we launched the Workplace Assistance System. This system is still being improved, but individuals with severe disabilities in Taiwan are now gradually able to get independent living services and assistance within the community.

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This photo shows our office (Slide6). There is four full-time and two part-time staff members as well as ten caregivers. Next to the office, there is an independent living experience room. Last year, we got a subsidy from the Rotary Club and we installed various equipment and AI technology with the funds. Individuals with severe disabilities can operate equipment with voice technology or smartphones using AI technology. It is also possible to operate an electrical bed or cleaning robot with this technology. We will continue to develop AI technology along with cooperation from companies in Hongkong and Taiwan. We consider this as part of the social business, but because of high costs, from now on we have to make various policy proposals to get governmental subsidies. This photo shows the program we held in January this year.

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Now, I wish to talk about the forum held in Pakistan. I was very happy for the opportunity to participate in the Pakistan forum of 2019. I visited the office of Mr. Shafiq, the Duskin senior trainee. I am severely disabled so, at first, I was very worried about this visit, but our senior person carefully arranged the visit and I was treated very well and felt comfortable thanks to their activities. I was able to get to know and become friends with many people. I learned much about social business and how they made efforts in each place to engage with society in general. I participated in this forum while in a wheelchair. During my stay in Pakistan, my Yamaha wheelchair broke, but they fixed it very quickly and when it came back, I was very pleased because it looked brand new. I want to say, their project is really wonderful.

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I also learned about another social business during the forum. This was a women's organization that manufactures and sells necklaces and other accessories using paper. After returning to Taiwan, I shared what I learned in Pakistan. We held another forum there in order to discuss the possibility of starting a social business in Taiwan. There were many participants and we had guests from Japan as well.

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Many diverse groups of people gathered at this forum and generated a strong impact on those who participated. I also had the opportunity to meet some supporters there. The two ladies were very supportive of our activities and sent a donation to our center and asked me to give a lecture and hold an event. One more thing we gained was the opportunity to sell our products online, thus not needing to bear the cost of sales.

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Among the events to which we were invited, the independent living experience tour for students with disabilities also occurred. We went to Southern University and introduced independent living skills for PWDs to students. Last November, the students came to Taipei and had a meeting with the theme of barrier-free. Last May, however, the severity of COVID 19 spread and we could not go to the southern part of the island, so the workshop was held virtually. We had a very difficult time with COVID 19, but we were able to hold meetings with our friends virtually. Also, we could learn how to use the technology for virtual conferencing. From now on, we want to develop new workshops to spread what we learned as well as our ideas for training projects. I think this can be a type of social business in the future.

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The students who came from the southern part of the island to Taipei could submit to the Taiwanese President their requests. They also took a picture together. A few days later, we got the photos from the President's Office. Originally, there was a barrier-free passage to the office of the President only in the back of the building, but for our visit, they changed it to a totally barrier-free structure. At that point, we recognized our potential to change society.

This year, we launched another new project. That is the Civic Power Station project which is engaged with a solar energy company. This will probably be the project linked to SDGs. With the generation of solar power energy, we can protect the earth and also can generate some profits for the center.

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Our action going forward can be highlighted by these four key points: training project, development of AI technology, online commerce and barrier-free tour. We are considering how these projects can lead to social business.

Government assistance needs to change on the one hand but on the other hand, we need to make changes to the general public so that more awareness can be raised.

We need to continue to enjoy our work.

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Why don't you join us? Why don't we create together a society where no one is left behind?

In closing, we greatly appreciate the effort put forth by the Nippon Foundation and the JSRPD in collaborating with us. Our friends in Taiwan are working hard so I ask everyone here to further support us. Thank you very much.

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