

PRESS RELEASE



NINE IDEAS TO HELP INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ha Noi 9 October 2019 – Top nine innovative solutions* for increasing accessibility for persons with disability (PwDs) were presented in Ha Noi today at the Final Round of the Viet Nam SDG Challenge 2019, the first ever innovation competition to facilitate PwDs.

The competition was launch in July 2019 by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the National Startup Support Center (NSSC) of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), as part of the IMPACT TECHFEST's activities. It was aimed at empowering Viet Nam's 6.2 million persons with disabilities. With the final round taking place on the eve of the Viet Nam National Day for Entrepreneurs, the competition also helps promote a new way of doing business: business that “leaves no one behind”.

“Start-up journey is not easy, especially for social impact start up at the early steps,” said Mr. Pham Hong Quat- Director General, National Agency for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Development (NATEC – MOST). “It is certain that businesses with solutions for PwDs or businesses led by PwDs face with many challenges. But if we don’t start, don’t step forward from difficulties, we have nothing. Together with the community, we can make the changes, realizing inclusive innovations and bringing sustainable values for the society”.

The competition provided opportunities for entrepreneurs and PwDs to explore innovation solutions together and, at the same time, to raise awareness of the challenges and barriers faced by PwD.

The top nine teams have been selected from more than 30 qualified applications. The teams have come up with very creative business ideas to overcome accessibility problems faced by PwDs - from using AI to support autistic children and their families; compact tractors with

batteries for long-distance travel; to smart technology glasses which help users without limbs control electronic devices through only facial movement.

The teams have gone through an intensive incubation programme, which included business development training, meeting with experts and donors, online supports from experts and practice pitching. At the final round, the nine teams presented their projects to prestigious judges.

The top 3 (Etic, Goodluck and VunArt) of the competition will receive the 16,000 USD in total as the free-equity seed-funding from UNDP Vietnam. The top 2 (VunArt and Goodluck) will receive trips to attend the TECHFEST Viet Nam in South Korea to study the country's start-up and social enterprises support system, as well as connect with investors and experts for the potential collaboration. The intensive incubation programme will be given for the 2 potential teams (VunArt and Etic) by National Startup Support Center and KisStartup, respectively.

Addressing the Final Round event, Ms. Catherine Phuong, UNDP Assistant Resident Representative and Head of the Governance and Participation Team, thanked Vietnamese entrepreneurs for taking part in the competition and working so hard to find solutions to support persons with disabilities.

"Accessibility is not only a right of persons with disabilities, but also a means of ensuring that they are able to exercise all other rights in order to participate fully in society. It is both a social need, and a market need, as we see start-ups develop products and services for persons with disabilities and grow their consumer base," she noted.

For more information, please visit:

The Competition's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sdgchallengevietnam/>
Web page: <http://bit.ly/SDGChallengeVN2019>

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THE JUDGES:

- Mr. Pham Hong Quat- Director General, National Agency for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Development (NATEC), Ministry of Science and Technology
- Ms. Catherine Phuong, Assistants Resident Representative, UNDP Viet Nam
- Ms. Pham Kieu Oanh, CEO, Center for Social Initiatives Promotion
- Ms. Vo Thi Hoang Yen, CEO, Disability Resource and Development Center
- Mr. Pham Vu Thang, Director, Thrive Foundation
- Ms. Do Thu Giang, Founder, The he Xanh JSC

***THE FINALISTS**



Eco4P is an undergraduate team from Hanoi university of science and technology

In order to develop an ecosystem supporting autisms and their families, Eco4P innovate a solution combined both hardware and software. The development path is divided into 2 periods. In the first period, Eco4P will provide positioning devices along with daily dairy app for parents. Daily dairy app will connect with experts and give advice. In the second period, based on the data collected, Eco4P will apply AI on analyzing autisms' behaviors recorded through camera.

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Colin Blackwell is a human resource expert. During his time as chairman of the World Bank's human resources department, Colin researched on human resources for people with disabilities in Vietnam. This created the inspiration and motivation for Colin to create Enablecode.

With the goal of demonstrating that the capacity of the disabled in Vietnam can participate and contribute to the process of developing international standard software, Enablecode works with institutions and non-governmental organizations to support people with disabilities by offering training on economic and technological skills. After these training courses, the disabled can choose to work outside or continue their career development at Enablecode. At Enablecode, people with disabilities can get jobs and submit online. Their main job is to contribute to teaching artificial intelligence through the verification and adjustment of image recognition results of artificial intelligence through the orders of international businesses.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/enablecode.vn/>



Mr. Tich is a mechanical engineer. He was born a normal person but a traffic accident robbed him of his freedom of movement. Experiencing inconveniences in moving, especially in long-distance travel, Tich had learned and applied his knowledge to produce Etic wheelchairs.

Etic manufactures and distributes separate tractors, which can be easily removable with wheelchairs and compact tractors equipped with spare batteries for long-distance travel.

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Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj9TTXU5sImR-INryC8FdHA>



Goodluck is a team that originated from the hackathon in the CSR segment of technology enterprise MTI.

With the goal of building technology to support communication for the hearing impaired in everyday life, Goodluck has developed sensor devices that recognize sign language and support communication. The team has now converted sign language to text. In the next process it is expected to build two-way language translation.

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With the desire to improve the view of people with disabilities in general and the visually impaired, Incovi brings to the competition the Model of educational products combining practical experience. Through experience-changing classroom experiences, this model can help ordinary people be motivated to live, change their perceptions and views about people with disabilities.

Currently, Incovi has organized about 12 programs for students from elementary school to university level, for hostel, boy scouts, etc. Programs will help people sympathy with the blind, encourage people appreciate life and create opportunities for the blind earn their living.

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Starting out as one of the teachers trained in the education of children with intellectual disabilities, Ngoc Anh understands the difficulties and hardships that children and their families face in life. Sympathizing with the situation of the children, she and some colleagues have worked together to build a model of support, training and employment connection for people with intellectual disabilities called "kite classes".

The goal of the kite classes is to build a networking and job placement for people with intellectual disabilities. To be able to accomplish this, she has outlined two approaches that are also two main activities for kite classes. Firstly, Kite classes provide intervention counseling, open skills classes for children with autism and intellectual disabilities. This is a premise for those children to improve their own capacity and values, and expand the network, approach the needs of the target group. Secondly, Kite classes create test jobs for people with intellectual disabilities so that they can observe and evaluate suitable jobs as well as notable points when working with children with intellectual disabilities. Currently, the kite classes are providing visual teaching materials for students with autism and intellectual disabilities made by themselves from the kite class.

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While volunteering at the center for people with disabilities in Da Nang, Mr. Hoang Anh learned about the difficulties of the disabled in daily activities. One of the difficulties is usage of computers for people with upper limb disabilities. This is a major barrier for people with upper limb disabilities to access today's technology society.

With the goal of supporting people with disabilities to expand their opportunities and knowledge through using computers, Multi has developed a product called Multiglass. This is a sensitive glass device that acts as a wireless mouse to help users control through facial movements. Currently the company has sold 10000 products. Products are distributed on B2B channel and promoted by word of mouth.

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Mr. Thai Anh is the chairman of Hanoi Deaf Association. As a part of the community, he knows the biggest problem for deaf people is the communication barrier. Because of this barrier, many Deaf people cannot express their desired aspirations and cannot acquire knowledge to grow up. Therefore, he is always searching for solutions to support the community. During a camp trip for the deaf in Korea, he got access to an online sign language translation service.

Realizing that sign language translation service has not been implemented in Vietnam as well as in Southeast Asia, he created SC Deaf with the aim of raising awareness so that deaf people no longer have barriers to ordinary people. SC Deaf provides 2 services. The first is an online interpretation that helps deaf people who want to communicate with ordinary people more easily through using application. The deaf can access the application and connect both

interpreters and listeners, from which the interpreter will directly translate for the listener at a fast pace. Because the number of people who know sign language is very limited, SC Deaf provides a second service, which is teaching and interacting with people with disabilities and providing training.

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Mr. Cuong is a mild leg disabled person. Experiencing the problems encountered in life, he realized that the products of people with disabilities are still associated with inherent images such as low quality, purchased for support.

With the goal of gathering focal points to help people with disabilities develop their profession and competitive products for people with disabilities, he founded Vun Art. Vun Art provides handicrafts (bags, canvas mosaics, etc.) as well as handcrafting experience services for tourists and students. At Vun Art, workers are mostly disabled people in different forms. Each type of disability will work in accordance with the capacity and be paid accordingly with the state insurance premium. His model has had certain success and received a request from the Lao government to expand the model in their country. Vun Art's partners are diverse, from tourist groups, students to large organizations such as the US and German embassies, ...

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