



## Urban Agenda Platform

*The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.*

# Doh Eain: Renewing Yangon

Region	Asia and the Pacific
Award Scheme	EXPO Dubai Global Best Practices
Start Year	2017
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

Doh Eain, which means “Our Home” in the Myanmar language, is a community-centred design firm which protects the architectural, cultural, and historical heritage of Yangon while bringing new life to its spaces by converting trash alleys into gardens, composting stations, street markets, playgrounds, and art galleries; and renewing other spaces where community members can make memories—and positive change.

## Background and Objective

After a series of colonizations and wars, Myanmar (then Burma) achieved independence in 1948; but soon after, a military junta dominated the country from 1962 to 2010. When the new democracy emerged in 2010 (solidified further in 2015), this eased trade and other economic sanctions; but Myanmar’s level of democracy and ethical reputation are still in question on the global stage, and the country does not have the same economic privilege as other nations. As the most populated city in Myanmar, Yangon is a vibrant and unique city full of remarkable architecture, capable and curious young people, and economic potential. It is also located in a country which is predicted to be one of the worst equipped to resiliently manage the impacts of climate change, largely due to a need for more action on the part of the government and civil society to prepare for the severe change to Myanmar’s ecosystems which has already begun. For many of Yangon’s residents, however, this is far too lofty a goal; they express a need to focus instead on securing personal and financial stability for themselves and their families. That said, many people who live in Yangon express the wish to transform their city into one with cleaner air, safer streets, and increased economic opportunities for all. While Yangon has the densest concentration of colonial-era buildings of any city in Asia (at risk due to international development since 2011), it has one of the lowest public space-per-person ratios in South East Asia. Doh Eain saw a role for a social enterprise to preserve and improve heritage and urban landscapes directly with the people and communities who inhabit them. There was a gap in the market for the action-oriented work that is key in maintaining the city’s unique characteristics and creating an urban environment that enables people and society to thrive. Doh Eain’s vision is that collectively, we can make cities more vibrant, inclusive and sustainable places to live, work, and enjoy. Their mission is to preserve heritage, improve public spaces, and organise activities that connect people with places, employing a user-centered, participatory approach. In doing this they aim to inspire and enable people to participate in re-shaping their city while retaining cultural heritage.

## Outcomes and Impacts

Over 15,000 square meters of wasted or neglected space brought back into public usage. This includes 12 alleyways cleaned and restored, the upgrade of 2 street areas, and 3 play area/park projects, all with close participation of residents leading to greater levels of social cohesion amongst their communities as well as improved health, play and wellbeing; • Research and engagement with over 50 communities in Yangon across 15 townships; • Capacity building and public outreach to government, professionals, residents and tourists through many impact days, walking tours and talk series, as well as the deeper engagement of over 200 volunteers in the delivery of work. Doh Eain’s impact measurement framework includes the following areas, for which they are in the process of rolling out regular measurements. Doh Eain strives to contribute to 8 overall outcomes: Sense of Agency and Ability to Shape One’s Environment Fundamental to the beliefs at Doh Eain is the engagement and participation of people. They aim to understand local people’s lived experiences and work together to build on their assets to create the spaces people want to live, work and play in. Doh Eain’s placemaking framework methodology embraces human centred design, designing for people with people, building the capacity of people to be the primary actors in their lives. They group their projects in consultative, participatory and co-creative projects, and strive to primarily deliver participatory and co-creative projects. Monitoring their work against these levels helps them understand the levels of responsibility, influence and decision-making people are able to have over their own environments in a given context. Social Cohesion Social cohesion is defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate. Within the context of Doh Eain’s work they are focused on social cohesion at the local societal level, increasing the level of interaction within communities. In order to understand their impact on increasing social cohesion they will measure levels of interaction, perception of safety, connection and trust in the areas in which they work. Sense of Place A sense of place can be defined as a unique collection of qualities and characteristics—visual, cultural, social, and environmental—that provide meaning to a location. Sense of place is what makes one area, city or town different from another. It is what makes our physical surroundings worth caring about. At Doh Eain they aim to increase the feeling of attachment and pride people have with their neighbourhoods,



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and they will measure this along with levels of interaction. Access to Public Space Research shows that high quality public spaces have economic, social and environmental value. Yangon has one of the lowest public space per person ratio in South East Asia. Doh Eain works with communities to increase the breadth of safe inclusive spaces and neighbourhoods and people's access to them. Health Health is much more than the absence of disease or injury. In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) described health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being." There is much evidence of the impact placemaking can have on the health of people, related to some of the above goals. This impact area primarily concentrates on the ways in which Doh Eain's work contributes to physical activity. The Environment Doh Eain seeks to reduce negative impacts on the environment. In particular they monitor their use of local sourcing and the % of recycled materials they use. In addition, they aim to increase the level of greening across the areas in which they work, whilst reducing the littering and increasing recycling behaviours in their areas of work. Economic Vibrancy Increasing the economic activity, and consequently local livelihoods, in communities is integral to the work of Doh Eain. This can take form in the capital raised for people to manage their public space; income generated for local suppliers, shops, and restaurants; and/or the increased income for heritage property owners. Capacity for Restoration and Placemaking Doh Eain is committed to spreading awareness and understanding of the importance of liveable, sustainable and inclusive cities. They regularly contribute to growing the capacity of citizens, government officials, and professionals to take an inclusive, participatory, and/or placemaking approach to their environments; to value heritage; and to undertake high quality regeneration projects that can benefit the local environment and livelihoods. Inclusive One of Doh Eain's principles is inclusivity. They focus in particular on women and girls, people with disabilities and the elderly—and also seek to ensure equal participation amongst different ethnic and religious groups. Doh Eain is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, both within their organisation and in all their community and stakeholder engagements. Moreover, they believe that accommodating and leveraging a diversity of perspectives and abilities is a chance to make their projects and organisation more successful. They seek in all their activities to be inclusive, and to continually reflect and take positive action to promote the inclusion of excluded individuals and groups. Long term Through commercially viable activities, Doh Eain seeks to bring about the lasting preservation of heritage and public space; commercially viable in that these projects are self-sustaining. Through their complementary public outreach work, they seek to change people's perceptions and attitudes towards their city in a lasting way. Their government relations and advocacy work hopes to bring about regulatory and policy changes over time.

## Sustainability and Scalability

Doh Eain intends to spread their participatory practice with other cities throughout Asia, and have already begun some of that work. While not all specifics of working in Yangon's context will translate, the lessons learned there have the potential to be useful throughout other ASEAN and developing countries. Scaling up Doh Eain's projects in Yangon & beyond offers the potential to improve the lived environments and sense of place for billions of urbanites worldwide.

## Gender and Social Inclusivity

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## Initiative Contribution

• Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere • Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture • Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages • Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all • Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls • Goal 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all • Goal 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all • Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all • Goal 9 - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation • Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries • Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable • Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns • Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts • Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development • Goal 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss • Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels • Goal 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



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## Innovative Initiative

Doh Eain's placemaking framework is far different from a top-down approach. Rather, their innovative methodology embraces human centred design: designing for people, with people, building the capacity of people to be the primary actors in their lives. In all appropriate contexts, Doh Eain actively involves diverse and representative community members to shape the design, implementation, and caretaking of the projects in their local spaces and homes. This is not only respectful; it's incredibly fruitful. Most recently, Doh Eain has pivoted their research and community engagement to function almost entirely online; no easy feat in Myanmar. They are in the process of codifying the best practices they're learning from other sources and their own experiences, and will share those tactics with likeminded enterprises and organisations.