

# Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION<sup>Review</sup>

---

*Leping Supplement*  
**Southeast Asian Social Innovation Network**  
By Carolyn McMillan & Mark Anderson

Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Spring 2019

Copyright © 2018 by Leland Stanford Jr. University  
All Rights Reserved

Productivity, and Innovation Board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Singapore), the Singapore International Foundation, and the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) provide funding to build capacity and collaboration in the sector.

Besides quasi-governmental intermediaries, Singapore-based private investment networks, such as Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), Impact Investment Exchange Asia (IIX), and Transformational Business Network Asia, stimulate growth in the sector by connecting social good businesses with global partners and investors. Accelerators and incubators like Base of the Pyramid (BoP) Hub, Singtel Future Makers, and Impact Hub Singapore offer learning platforms for cross-sector collaboration among business ventures, technologists, and manufacturers. In 2011, Ashoka Malaysia & Singapore opened its doors as a resource hub for young social innovators. The organization recently elected its first cohort of fellows looking to make systematic change throughout Asia. Besides mentorship, the organization will provide up-and-coming young social innovators with the cross-sectoral resources they need to survive beyond the first two to three years of their operations.

Third, Singapore is setting the bar high for other countries to follow when it comes to the role that government plays in promoting a “do good” business mentality and culture. For instance, the Singapore Exchange (SGX) made it mandatory for all listed companies to report their environmental, social, and governance practices starting in 2017. This mandatory sustainability reporting on a “comply or explain” basis could assert influence on companies to examine their code of corporate governance from the perspectives of sustainability and strategic development.

In addition to these initiatives, the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) is funding research to examine if and how state-led programs can create lasting impact in the sector. NVPC

partnered with the NUS Business School to establish the Company of Good Fellowship Program, which has more than 1,000 participating for-profit enterprises learning how to do good in more strategic, sustainable, and impactful ways.

### UNIVERSITY AS INCUBATOR

The career paths that young people embark on are often dependent on the opportunities afforded to them in their communities. As a result, higher learning institutions act as important centers of societal influences and bear a lot of responsibility for how future generations tackle major social and economic challenges. Universities in Singapore have proved that they are aware of their moral responsibilities and global development.

At NUS, Poh Kam Wong, professor and senior director of NUS Entrepreneurship Centre (NEC), introduced a purpose-driven approach to business-model design that puts social impact and social cause as the primary goal. The module is offered to those inside and outside the NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) program community. Singapore Management University (SMU) also redesigned their core undergraduate curriculum to enhance multidisciplinary learning through integrating internship and community service. First available during the 2018-2019 academic year, the new exploratory course will encourage students to experiment with classes outside their major or usual sphere of interest. To qualify for an internship with the NUS NOC program, students must complete certain course modules, from business fundamentals to research design processes. The program pairs students with a startup or a business for a yearlong internship.

“We want to build an ecosystem [to support social entrepreneurship], not just in NUS, but in Singapore, or in Asia itself,” says Jie Yi Lee, the executive of NEC who is responsible for building a roster of social enterprises for NEC’s community.

## Southeast Asian Social Innovation Network

BY CAROLYN MCMILLAN  
& MARK ANDERSON

**F**unded by the European Commission and coordinated by Glasgow Caledonian University, the Southeast Asian Social Innovation Network (SEASIN) project aims to develop a network of universities that will help support its goals of achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, social cohesion, and equity in Southeast Asia through intercultural, curricular, and extracurricular activities. Launched in 2016, the project currently partners with four Southeast Asian countries—Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Malaysia—and involves 15 partners, which include 11 universities and four social innovation partners in seven countries across Asia and Europe.

Collaborating with local universities is the first step to better understanding how higher education institutions may support

social impact in the communities surrounding them. With this knowledge, SEASIN established Social Innovation Support Units (SISU) at universities in Myanmar (Cooperative University, Thanlyin, and Yangon University of Economics), Thailand (Kasetsart University and Thammasat University), Cambodia (National University of Management and the Royal University of Phnom Penh), and Malaysia (Universiti Teknologi MARA and Sunway University).

Through these partnerships, SEASIN promotes and supports university-social enterprise cooperation, social entrepreneurship, and graduate employability with an emphasis on social innovation projects, incubation, and training. The units aim to achieve these goals through a range of learning and teaching tools, from the development of postgraduate programs to creating virtual spaces for sharing best social innovation practices and learning outcomes.

While the SISUs instituted by the eight Southeast Asian universities in SEASIN share an overall aim to support social innova-

tion, generate impact, and demonstrate the value of social innovation to policy makers, each university’s focus is dependent on and adapted to local priorities and reflects the characteristics of the universities themselves, their contexts, and current and potential user needs. For instance, the Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, spotlights impactful social innovation projects, while the National University of Management, Cambodia, provides space and resources, and Kasetsart University, Thailand, fosters research and impact measurement.

As more universities become aware and committed to their role in social innovation, increasing importance is placed on what the education system can and should do to break down barriers to social innovation and become powerful forces for impact. ♦

For more information on the project, visit [www.seasin-eu.org](http://www.seasin-eu.org).

**CAROLYN MCMILLAN** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health at Glasgow Caledonian University. **MARK ANDERSON** is the director of the Research and Innovation Office at Glasgow Caledonian University.