SINGAPORE: A centre will be set up to help NGOs (non-governmental organisations) grow by strengthening the governance, management and best practices in the sector.

The Lien Foundation will set up Asia's first Centre for Social Innovation at the Singapore Management University (SMU) in six months.

Under the collaboration, Lien Foundation will donate $6 million over a five-year period.

The World Toilet Organisation, founded in Singapore, is an international player in conducting humanitarian work in countries with poor sanitation.

Mercy Relief, which is big on reconstruction efforts in the region, is another NGO that springs from Singapore.

The Lien Foundation Centre for Social Innovation hopes to help more local organisations go international.

One is by providing research into best practice standards.

Mr Lawrence Lien, Governor of Lien Foundation, said: "We hope that with the research, we have greater clarity of the social issues that are out there, the needs that are out there so that we can design the best sort of intervention for the different sectors."

"We hope to also through research find the best practices, the best intervention so that we can disseminate that and communicate them to the NPOs (Not for Profit organisations)."

Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman of Lien Foundation Centre for Social Innovation at SMU, said: "It becomes a place where they can source for leaders, people who can help them to grow, to train their own people, whose been with them for many years and it is time to upgrade, and to have new knowledge and skills to take the organisation to the next level."

Many non-profit organisations say having such a centre in Singapore is timely - for very little research is currently being done into the non-profit sector.

As most NGOs face financial constraints, consolidating information and sharing of best practices will go towards taking care of both financial and social returns.

Associate Professor Tan Wee Liang, Chairman of Lien Foundation Centre for Social Innovation at SMU, said: "The centre will have some executive programmes and we are in the process of developing these right now."

"We hope to attract international and regional leaders in the non-profit sector either academics or leaders or policy-makers who come in to share what they have been doing - their experiences, what best practice is, and what their research findings are with the local community and also with the region."

"In terms of the community itself, in terms of outreach, we will involve both in Singapore and regionally, what we will do is we will send student teams to be involved in the NP (not for profit) sector, working with them as interns and as volunteers. And we actually have built in our budget, a capacity of sending students overseas to help out."

The centre also plans to develop the ideas and discussions into a teaching case, materials that can be used by the students and the practitioners in the social service sector.

Ms Annie Koh, Associate Dean of Lee Kong Chian School of Business at SMU, said: "Other than being very passionate about this social service sector, they will also have the skills and the tools to be more effective."

"Having this centre, invest in writing the cases, subsiding the course for all the people to attend that will allow us to grow by leaps and bounds." - CNA/de