

Philippine NGOs cited as benchmarks for the rest of ASEAN

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The Philippines emerged as a leader in modern-day philanthropic efforts in the Southeast Asian region, according to a recent study done by the Lien Center for Social Innovation-Singapore Management University. The research study entitled “Levers for Change—Philanthropy in select Southeast Asian countries,” which is part of the Social Insight Research Series, closely examines philanthropic activities in the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand.

The study cites the efforts of Philippine non-government organizations (NGOs), identifying them as a benchmark for non-profits in other Southeast Asian countries to learn from and emulate.

At the launch of the study, Prapti Upadhyay Anand, principal researcher and proponent, shares that what was observed in the Philippines is in many respects among the most diverse and structured in the region. Efforts to nurture philanthropic giving have allowed for the Philippines to have the largest number of locally established institutional organizations—groups that strive to build their relationships with donors, so that diverse engagements are geared towards the long-term.

“Philanthropic investments in health, education, social services, and in building public infrastructure, developing social enterprises, supporting sustainable development, and advancing equitable social policies provide evidence of philanthropy’s impact and its continued importance to socioeconomic development in the Philippines,” says Anand.



While Anand’s interviewees noted that sustainability remains the biggest challenge for NGOs in the Philippines, the country’s institutional philanthropic sector is relatively advanced, with a mix of private and publicly supported programs. Corporate donations were also identified as an increasingly important source of income for NGOs, and community philanthropy in underdeveloped areas was growing. Moreover, multiple networks of NGOs allow for greater opportunities to collaborate, and advocacy remains to be central in the work of NGOs in the Philippines.

(From left) Prapti Upadhyay Anand (author), Crystal Hayling (editor), and AF representatives Lolita Delgado-Fansler, Fely Rixhon and Oman Jiao.

Some examples of the efforts done in the Philippines include the Department of Education’s Adopt-a-School Program, a public-private partnership for social development that aims to upgrade and modernize public elementary and high schools through partnerships with the business community, foundations, individuals, private entities in the Philippines and abroad, as well as to

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generate funding outside traditional funding streams and the national budget. The TEN Moves! campaign, which was launched in 2011 to raise funds to build 10,000 classrooms in public schools across the country, was cited as well.

The research study was launched locally with the support of the Association of Foundations (AF) and the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), two organizations that provide support to the social sector by building the capacity of their members, promoting community philanthropy to mobilize local resources, and facilitating learning and the exchange of best practices.

The “Levers for Change” study is based on an analysis of current national laws, an examination of policy proposals, a study of common practices, a collection of data related to non-profits and charitable giving, as well as individual interviews and focus group discussions with non-profit and philanthropic leaders, deeply tackling factors that trigger philanthropy. The study pointed out that growing domestic philanthropy is imperative to support NGOs in tackling persistent social challenges, and in enabling them to advocate for policies that are responsive, sustainable and encouraging.