GENDER LENS INCUBATION
AND ACCELERATION

Impact Report

GLIA

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment remain critical goals to realize inclusive and productive societies, where all members have opportunities to thrive.

Entrepreneurship is widely considered as an effective pathway to women's economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, and sustainable innovation. However, in many parts of Asia, gender gaps in entrepreneurship continue to persist, leading to disproportionate challenges for women entrepreneurs and other minority groups. The lack of gender-smart entrepreneurship support is a contributing factor to this persistent gap. To address this issue, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and ygap partnered to support the development of inclusive, gender-smart entrepreneurial ecosystems in Asia through the Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (GLIA) program.

In 2018, as part of the Asia Women Impact Fund, SPF developed the concept of GLIA with the goal of supporting entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) to experiment with approaches to integrate gender lens to their work, and ultimately provide more women and minority entrepreneurs with support, at scale. To leverage broader expertise and strengthen the practitioner's perspective for GLIA, SPF connected with DFAT in late 2018 at a Frontier Incubators workshop, a DFAT-funded initiative, established to support impact-focused ESOs and delivered by ygap, SecondMuse and conveners.org.

At this workshop, ygap, introduced to ESOs how a gender lens can be applied to incubation and acceleration services. Due to the positive response from practitioners and mutual alignment between SPF, DFAT, and ygap, a collaboration was established to explore co-design and co-funding of the GLIA program to contribute to building more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems together.

Since then, GLIA has focused on understanding the needs of ESOs as they embark on their journey to learn and apply different gender lenses to their organization, programs, and ecosystem. We have applied a user-centered design approach, leveraging insights from GLIA partners that tested a wide range of gender approaches in the field, to ensure that the resources generated would be relevant and user-friendly. Moreover, the community of GLIA partners and users has grown organically and continues to find value in sharing learnings.

With research support from Capital Human, this study aims to understand and communicate the progress made by ESOs and other practitioners in Asia as they engaged with GLIA. Data from a range of stakeholders including GLIA partners, ESOs, investors, and ecosystem players was analyzed and the key findings, use cases and outcomes are presented.

We hope this report will provide practitioners, funders, policymakers, and other ecosystem players with insights into the progress ESOs in Asia have made over the past 4 years as they worked towards advancing gender equality. More work remains as the world enters various new phases including recovery from the pandemic and a new era of work driven by the fourth industrial revolution. We welcome new opportunities to collaborate and work towards strengthening inclusive, gender-smart entrepreneurial ecosystems in Asia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality, such as constraints on women in the workforce and in the entrepreneurship arena, are costing Southeast Asian economies an average income loss of 17.5 per cent in the long term[1].

This is not the only opportunity cost. Research shows that investing in women entrepreneurs is not only good for inclusive development and achieving social cohesion but also for our environment, as women generally make more sustainable and resource efficient decisions for both their households and businesses.[2] In addition, women-led ventures can present a sound financial investment[3].

Despite the demonstrated results of the benefits of investing in women - and we see high rates of self-employment for women in the region - women-owned enterprises are often of smaller scale and scope than those owned by men, with many remaining at the micro level and in the informal sector despite their potential to expand beyond borders.

It is crucial for women entrepreneurs to have access to quality entrepreneurship support services that meet them where they are at and enable them to start, scale and formalize enterprises if they are to reach their potential to the same degree as male entrepreneurs.

1.1 The Role of ESOs

Entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) such as business Incubators and Accelerators, have the potential to deliver such services. In 2017, the Aspen Network for Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) established their East and Southeast Asia chapter to support such ESOs across the region to create a thriving ecosystem for Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs).

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Scaling Frontier Innovation program (SFI) sought to achieve impact and social change in Asia Pacific through supporting social entrepreneurship. SFI focused on interdependent parts of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including entrepreneurs, incubators and accelerators, intermediaries, brokers and capital providers. The SFI program applied a gender analysis to the program, ensuring to address bias and harmful power dynamics in practices and processes in support of social entrepreneurship. The aim of the program is to support entrepreneurial ecosystems where all can benefit from the outcomes of innovation and entrepreneurship.

ESOs have become a key part of entrepreneurial ecosystems across the Asia-Pacific region and serve as critical support for early-stage, growth-oriented ventures.[4] On average, ventures that participate in accelerators increase their revenue, number of employees, and externally sourced investment by greater margins than those that applied to accelerator programs but were rejected.[5]

That being said, not enough women-led ventures are applying to acceleration, incubation and other entrepreneurship training programmes[6], and when women-led ventures do participate they don't benefit as much as men do with research actually showing that acceleration can exacerbate the gender gap in equity finance.[7]

[1] Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN: Transforming Prospects, Transforming Societies, UNESCAP, 2017

[2] Sweden Ministry of Sustainable Development, 2012, Do Women Leave a Smaller Ecological Footprint than Men?

[3] https://www.bcg.com/en-au/publications/2018/why-women-owned-startups-are-better-bet

[4] Acceleration in Asia-Pacific: Early impacts on participating ventures, Global Accelerator Learning Initiative, Australian Aid, 2020, p 19

[5] GALI, 2021, Does Acceleration Work?

[6] GALI, 2020, Accelerating Women-led Startups

[7] IFC, We-Fi, Village Capital, 2020, Venture Capital and the Gender Financing Gap

1.2 Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration

This is where Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (GLIA) comes in. When we spoke to ESOs across Southeast Asia in 2018, there was recognition that gender gaps exist in entrepreneurship as well as an interest in ESOs playing a role to reduce these. However ESOs expressed lacking the knowhow and resources to improve their services and not knowing where to start. GLIA was therefore designed by practitioners to build the capacity and effectiveness of ESOs in applying a gender lens to their organizations and programs, and in doing so, play a powerful role in leveling the playing field for women entrepreneurs.

As well as enhancing access and quality of service for women entrepreneurs, GLIA has increasingly expanded to build a network of ESOs across Southeast Asia who consider diversity, equity and inclusion across all of their work, for people of all genders.

1.3 Key Initiatives under GLIA

GLIA was developed to increase the inclusivity of entrepreneurial ecosystems by removing barriers for entrepreneurs of all genders to access appropriate and high quality support.

It started as an interactive toolkit developed by and for ESOs, and over three years, informed by feedback and outcomes from ESOs and other ecosystem actors, grew to include capacity building programmes and a community of practice.

The Toolkit

The GLIA Toolkit is an interactive resource for guiding ESOs through the journey of uncovering how their activities impact, and are experienced by, different gendered groups. The toolkit equips ESOs with the mindset, strategies, and frameworks to improve their operations and programs so they can better serve the needs of entrepreneurs of all genders. It is a resource that is being continuously updated and expanded to ensure relevance and alignment with a rapidly evolving ecosystem.

The GLIA Toolkit 1.0 was launched in February 2020, as a comprehensive web based and downloadable PDF resource. In March 2021, GLIA 2.0: Measuring Gender Equality, was launched to provide additional resources to the Toolkit, with impact indicators to measure the effectiveness of support projects that incorporate a gender perspective.

13 **ESOs from 7 countries across Southeast Asia** contributed to its development

20+ Resources (frameworks, tools and examples)

GLIA ESO partners in Southeast Asia

Myanmar
- Phandeeyar
- ONOW

Vietnam
- New Energy Nexus
- WISE

Thailand
- Changefusion
- New Energy Nexus

Cambodia
- Agile Development Group
- SHE Investments

Philippines
- Makesense
- New Energy Nexus
- Villgro Philippines
- xChange

Malaysia
- Impact Hub Kuala Lumpur

Indonesia
- Impact Palu
- Instellar
- New Energy Nexus

Capacity building

The GLIA capacity building programs provide additional coaching, accountability and community to ESOs who are new to applying a gender lens. They are 3-6 months in duration and support groups of ESOs to identify key opportunities for them to advance gender equality through their work, as well as grant funding for them to test and implement gender strategies.

After designing and delivering the first two programs, ygap is now training other ESOs to contextualize and deliver capacity building services in the Philippines, Cambodia and Thailand through a train-the-trainer model.

The latter helps to empower local ESOs to contribute to building the capacity of other ESOs within their local ecosystem, therefore deepening, growing and localizing the impact of GLIA further.

Small grant funding was provided to participating ESOs as an acknowledgement of the time and resources required to implement small projects and internal improvements, which can be difficult for organizations that have limited resources.

Enabling ESOs to dedicate these resources to more deeply reflect and take meaningful actions towards implementing or improving gender equality initiatives meant that critical programming and operational resources were not depleted in doing so, and also enabled higher quality testing and feedback.

As a result, the actions implemented by ESOs were catalysts for longer term outcomes such as policy and systems changes.

03

Capacity building programs delivered over 3 years

20

Pilot projects delivered by ESOs internally within their organizations and programs to improve gender inclusion practices

19 ESOs graduated from GLIA training, with a further 8 ESOs across 2 additional countries to be trained in 2022

Community of Practice

The GLIA Community of Practice (CoP) provides community, accountability, collaboration and practice sharing for ESOs who are more advanced in applying a gender lens to their work. It was established in 2020 as a space for continual learning and for developing additional resources and examples that can further expand the GLIA Toolkit.

One such resource is the Minimum standards for a gender smart ESOs, which is a set of 7 standards that aim to provide a clear set of practical guidelines that can be shared across the sector.

The latter are intended to accompany the GLIA toolkit and reference many of the gender lens strategies contained within it.

06

Community of Practice members with
12 members across
4 SEA countries

20+ Hours
of community
discussions and sharing

07

Gender minimum standards created by the CoP

06

Projects implemented by CoP members across their respective organizations

5+

Internal gender policies created

50+ ESO staff
members across 4 countries engaged in organizational change

15 Internal workshops
held by ESOs across Asia

2. THE IMPACT

The overarching goal of GLIA is to enhance women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, in particular through supporting women entrepreneurs.

In order to provide equitable support for women entrepreneurs to start and scale enterprises across Southeast Asia, GLIA has built a community of ESOs committed to gender equality in their organizations and programs, providing space and support for capacity building and experimentation to deeply reflect, plan and operationalize new methods for applying a gender lens to their work.

GLIA has also focused on collaboration between organizations, including funders and ESOs, to build practitioner-led, collaborative tools and resources which are designed for use across the globe.
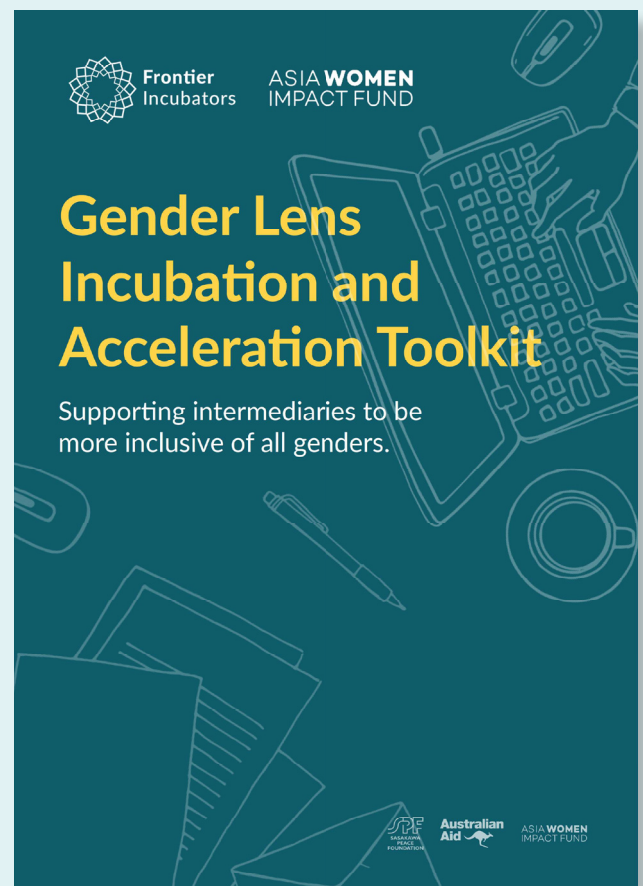
By providing tools, resources, community, collaborative efforts and capacity building support for ESOs to become more gender inclusive, GLIA aims to increase the number and quality of entrepreneurship support services available to women.

2.1 How the GLIA Toolkit has been used

The GLIA Toolkit can be used as an effective starting point for ESOs and other ecosystem players who want to start their journey into understanding what gender equity is and how to achieve it in their operations and programs.

The toolkit was used by survey respondents within the entrepreneurship ecosystem to:

- Mobilize change to address intersectional gender inequalities

- Generate impetus for a gender lens focus and leadership buy-in

- Reflect as a team on gender and organizational gaps

- Create safe spaces, common language and conversations around gender equality both internally and externally

- Strengthen capacity for applying a gender lens to entrepreneurship support

- Support implementation of other gender lens and GLIA activities

Frontier Incubators
ASIA **WOMEN** IMPACT FUND

Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit

Supporting intermediaries to be more inclusive of all genders.

SPF SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION
Australian Aid
ASIA **WOMEN** IMPACT FUND

2.2 Intended Outcomes and Impact

GLIA surveys of ecosystem actors in 2021 found that:

97% of respondents are applying a **gender lens to their work**

71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the GLIA toolkit guidelines were **practical and easy to use**

Over 17,000 women entrepreneurs have been supported by ESOs who have used the GLIA Toolkit since it's launch

62% of respondents rated the level of impact of the GLIA toolkit as **effective or highly effective**

The intended long-term outcomes of GLIA are: (1) increased inclusivity of entrepreneurial ecosystems and removing barriers for entrepreneurs to access ecosystem support, and (2) standardization of how advancing gender equality in acceleration and incubation is measured collectively.

We believe that a more inclusive and equitable ecosystem can result in more equal and diverse representation of entrepreneurs across Asia, and more women entrepreneurs being able to grow their businesses. This can in turn lead to positive impacts such as more products and services that are tailored to the needs of women, and more women role models in entrepreneurship.

The intermediate outcomes for the initial 4 years of the GLIA project period are to:

- Increase the capacity of ESOs in Asia to gain a deeper understanding of gender-smart acceleration and incubation as well as confidence to apply a gender-lens to organizational policies, entrepreneurship programming and promoting inclusive ecosystem development within their local community

- Change the mindsets within ESOs to intentionally apply a gender lens

- Support ESOs to apply a gender lens to parts of their operations and programs based on priorities and capacity

The impact achieved in the first 3 years of GLIA are demonstrated through the activities and changed practices of ESOs and funders within GLIA's CoP to make entrepreneurship support services more accessible and inclusive for women across Asia.

GLIA surveys of actors within the entrepreneurship ecosystem in 2021 found that organizations applied a gender lens to their work in many ways, with respondents identifying 18 different kinds of activities they have carried out which apply a gender lens.

The most common areas of applying a gender lens were:

Supporting women entrepreneurs

Program design

Organizational change

Impact measurement

In regards to program design, most respondents said that they applied a gender lens to their work through:

- the design of incubators and accelerators

- using female role models

- working with women as mentors and advisors

- supporting enterprises which impact women through their value chains

Other key activities that applied a gender lens focussed on women's access to capital, including developing pipelines of women-led investment ready ventures, allocating capital to women-led or women centric ventures, and working with women investors.

"The GLIA toolkit has been a helpful reference for specific projects we have launched over the past year- particularly as we revise our impact measurement and during the research phase of our FLA project (cross-border gender lens investing)."

SPRING ACTIVATOR

2.3 Increased capacity of ESOs to understand the gendered impacts of acceleration and incubation

GLIA surveys of ecosystem actors in 2021 found that:

71%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the GLIA toolkit was **effective in helping** their organization to understand how to apply a gender lens

71%

of respondents considered that the advice in the GLIA toolkit was **actionable or highly actionable** to their work

"Before the toolkit, we always thought that our activities, program process and planning are gender inclusive and believed that having more men than women within our community and network pool was the status quo. Using the toolkit made us aware that how we were designing our initiatives may have contributed to the low gender diversity in our pool and how we can start reframing and redesigning our activities."

NEW ENERGY NEXUS PHILIPPINES

2.4 Change of mindset within ESOs to intentionally consider gender impacts

71% of respondents felt the GLIA toolkit contributed to **shaping the mindset** of their team, management or organization and how they think about gender equality

The toolkit has allowed organizations to: start discussions internally around issues that may have a cultural stigma attached to them or may not have been discussed previously; holding safe spaces for teams to openly share and discuss the diversity and inclusivity of their organizations and programs, and thereby catalyzing initiatives to implement change.

These internal conversations were focused not only on gender in regards to making ESOs more accessible for women but also on broader gender equity, gender identity, intersectionality, and the importance of creating accessible entrepreneurship support for diverse entrepreneurs.

The opportunity to experiment in a purposeful way through the GLIA capacity building program has enabled learnings which have led to changed mindsets when it comes to how gender is considered by ESOs. By applying principles from the Toolkit and learning from other ESOs doing the work - and adapting them to their own organizations - rather than simply reading resources or participating in an online course, ESOs have shown changes in how they see gender equity as a critical success factor for creating impact through inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, as well as improving business performance.

Makesense: Introducing pronouns as a lever for inclusivity

During the GLIA program, Makesense (Philippines) changed their program application forms to include additional pronouns such as 'they/them'. As a result, around 20% of their applicants ticked the box that said they preferred to use 'they/them' pronouns. This prompted further internal discussions about how to integrate gender and the use of pronouns more purposefully into both their programs and across their organization.

Makesense leaders said that this change was a direct result of the GLIA Toolkit and participation in the Community of Practice.

"We couldn't have gone this extra mile - to take steps such as changing how we use pronouns - without realizing that this sort of change is very much aligned with our values."

The Makesense team made changes to curriculum and their Community Guidelines for their volunteer network, as well as changing small practices within their workplace, such as adding pronouns to their email signatures.

"We realized that not only is this something we need to train people in but it's also something that we need to do internally. Small things (such as changing email signatures to include pronouns) have led to more open conversations and people feeling more comfortable (about their gender identity, and sharing this at work).

Internally it's been a process of learning. How do we create safe spaces (for our team)?"

2.5 A gender lens has been applied to parts of ESO operations and programs based on priorities and capacity

As well as improving practices to support women entrepreneurs, multiple ESOs have used GLIA to develop a better understanding of gender equality within their organizations, leading to a shift in culture and mindset as well as a broader understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). This has meant building deeper internal team knowledge and understanding of gender, intersectionality (including disability) and inclusive workplace cultures.

ESOs have approached this in different ways. From an organizational standpoint, some have focused on internal systems including gender responsive policies, team engagement, recruitment processes, and improving team diversity and feelings of inclusion. This has resulted in an increase in diversity for some organizations (increased numbers of staff members who are female, gender diverse, or disabled) and at least 3 organizations launching new internal policies related specifically to creating a gender inclusive work environment. These policies range from equal parental leave benefits, menstruation leave, and acknowledgement of gender diversity and non-binary staff and participants.

"As a new organization, our early team consists mostly of men. We decided to create a more balanced power dynamic within the team as we are aware that we need both perspectives to grow better. We picked the GLIA toolkit 'organization' section, specifically for team composition. In the implementation of our new recruitment process, we created new advertisements for the positions we were recruiting for and put more 'friendly' content for women. The result is that we have been able to increase the (gender) ratio (within our team) from 1:5 females to males to 3:5 in a 2-month period." (English has been edited)

IMPACT PALU

SHE Investments: creating enabling environments as a lever for inclusivity

SHE Investments took the opportunity as part of the GLIA CoP to focus on their internal processes and the diversity of their team. Although SHE applies a gender lens to their programming by supporting only women entrepreneurs through their work, they acknowledged that more could be done internally to shift mindsets from focusing only on women, to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for a more diverse range of both staff and entrepreneurs.

Since focusing on this as an internal priority, SHE has launched a Staff Representative Committee, developed policies and procedures focused on gender, intersectionality and inclusivity, which are reviewed annually by all staff to provide feedback. This improved the diversity of their team in regards to background, religion, and disability.

"Being more purposeful about how we approach gender, taking a more intersectional and inclusive approach through our programs and particularly internally, has meant that we've taken those extra, more meaningful steps towards being an inclusive organization.

Although it is our mandate from the beginning to support women entrepreneurs to scale and bridge the gender gap in the SME sector, not all women are the same and GLIA has really given us the opportunity to explore this more deeply. It's directly benefited our team and our work, and seeing the internal open conversations around how we can have a more inclusive workplace and culture has been fantastic."

Makesense:
Blind recruitment to remove bias

Makesense Philippines has recently adopted a blind recruitment strategy for all advertised roles in their organization in an attempt to reduce bias when selecting candidates.

They are also no longer asking candidates for their educational background in job applications, after recognizing that education, like entrepreneurship, is not equally accessible by and inclusive of all genders in the Philippines.

Changefusion:
Supporting LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs

After piloting a workshop on imposter syndrome in 2020 with the female social entrepreneurs in their network, Changefusion is this year organizing another workshop for social entrepreneurs on incorporating a gender lens into your business.

Changefusion is also engaging an external expert to run an LGBTQIA+ lens workshop, to support their entrepreneurs in considering LGBTQIA+ issues when researching and developing their products and services.

2.6 GLIA is used as a complimentary resource to existing acceleration materials and training programs

While entrepreneurship support for SGBs in Asia is still nascent, there are more ESO programs being developed throughout the region. Recent incubation and acceleration programs have also started to use the GLIA Toolkit as an additional resource to other training materials to help incorporate a gender lens to the curriculum, team and aspects of program delivery.

"This toolkit is a great resource and I have personally used it in designing gender strategies and gender work with a variety of organizations to improve women's access to financial services and economic empowerment."

UNCDF

A key strength of the GLIA Toolkit is that it has been designed to be used and adapted by a variety of different organizations, tailoring it to specific needs and contexts. Rather than starting from the beginning when designing a new program that applies a gender lens, organizations are able to use existing content and tools, and even templates and suggested methods for reflection, delivery and measurement. Every country, ESO and program is different, and the GLIA Toolkit provides a foundation of strategies and tools for organizations to further build on.

"The GLIA Toolkit has been a core asset in designing TIN (The Incubation Network) . We have also helped a number of internal capacity building activities based on its content."

SECONDMUSE

SanThit accelerator, Myanmar "GLIA as a theory of change"

Launched in 2021, SanThit is Myanmar's first Gender-smart accelerator designed and delivered by a partnership between Emerging Markets Entrepreneurs (EME), Village Capital and SPF. Santhit helps local founders to grow their business while also applying a series of gender lenses to their business model. The Village Capital Entrepreneurship curriculum formed the foundation of the SanThit training program but EME said that much of the content in the GLIA Toolkit has informed the design of SanThit.

This is evident in their marketing approach for the program, which is more purposeful in how they use role models, representation, and what channels they are using for recruitment. In the design of the SanThit Accelerator, some parts of the GLIA Toolkit have been used throughout the program, such as taking particular exercises or concepts and adapting them to their context. For example, in some cases this has meant using a particular module and shortening it to a one-hour session to fit within the program's time constraints. EME also said that although elements of the Toolkit are used throughout SanThit, they are working to 'pick out the parts that are most useful (for our entrepreneurs)' and then referencing them with specific examples from Myanmar and, as much as possible, from their first cohorts. The GLIA toolkit was also incorporated into the theory of change for SanThit.

SheDisrupts, SouthEast Asia : GLIA as a critical complementary resource

Creatella Impact is a global development organization based in New York and Singapore that organizes SheDisrupts, a venture competition, mentorship, and pre-acceleration training program for women entrepreneurs. The GLIA toolkit was used as a complimentary resource to UN Women's WE Rise entrepreneurship resource during SheDisrupts in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

2.7 Building a Gender Inclusive Community and Promoting Collaboration within the Ecosystem

As well as building tools, resources and an ESO Community of Practice, GLIA has also contributed to wider sector collaborative efforts, highlighting the importance of partnerships and shared learnings between ecosystem players in creating a sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Stakeholders such as funders, investors and market builders have not only been involved in the GLIA development process, but have also used the GLIA Toolkit themselves and reported the benefits to their work.

"The GLIA toolkit has been most helpful for us in the way we think about and intentionally design ecosystems and convenings around different impact areas, and how these impact areas intersect with a gender lens."

AVPN

"We used the toolkit as a resource for the team in both FLA and our previous program (The Incubation Network). It provided an argument for why and how a gender lens should be applied, and helped team members with little experience to build their confidence with this."

FRONTIERS LAB ASIA

"(We will) suggest (GLIA) as a resource to consulting clients who are interested in learning more about GLI (Gender Lens Investing) and want tools. We've reviewed it for our own GLI work to see if there is anything new or innovative that we could borrow."

ATHENA GLOBAL

Recommendations for Funders

Funders are in a unique position to drive gender equality through effective ESO programming, and can use the GLIA Toolkit as part of their own organizational planning, as well as defining KPIs for their funding mandates and as a guide for ESO improved practices. Some funders interviewed as part of the GLIA CoP mentioned that it can be difficult to know which ESOs are most effective in their work, particularly in applying a gender lens. This creates an opportunity for funders and the ESOs they support to align on what the effective application of a gender lens to organizations and entrepreneurship programming looks like, and how it is measured.

It is important to also consider pairing funding with education or capacity building when incentivizing ESOs to effectively apply a gender lens to their work. ESOs surveyed as part of this Impact Report said that their top two limitations in applying a gender lens to their work was a lack of team knowledge and a lack of human and financial resources.

Conducting meaningful reviews of internal structures and processes, as well as potential gaps in programming design, curriculum and impact measurement, and finally investing the time and resources into making improvements, can be a costly exercise which many ESOs - particularly smaller and early stage organizations - may find difficult to justify without additional support.

Villgro: influencing government agencies to strengthen gender-inclusive practices

Villgro Philippines, an ESO based in the Philippines and a GLIA Community of Practice member, worked closely with ygap in 2021 as a pilot Training the Trainer (TTT) partner, receiving training from ygap, adapting the GLIA Toolkit to their local context, and subsequently training an additional five ecosystem players - one of which is a department of the Government of the Philippines that funds and supports incubator activities and programs. This has led to the government agency adopting a gender lens and amending their grant recipient requirements for ESOs, including the addition of KPIs which include gender metrics. As a key funder of entrepreneurship support programs across the country, the ongoing effect of this uptake by the government and its partners has the potential to improve the accessibility of incubators and accelerators for thousands of Filipino women entrepreneurs.

Capacity Building through education

Networks such as the Aspen Development Network for Entrepreneurs (ANDE) and Frontiers Lab Asia (FLA) have launched initiatives, which provide funding and capacity building opportunities for ESOs to apply a gender lens to their work.

Secondmuse (Singapore, global) said they used the toolkit as a resource for their team driving Frontiers Lab Asia (FLA) and The Incubation Network (TIN). Both FLA and TIN focus on supporting entrepreneurs or ESOs to collaboratively solve complex problems related to gender, inclusive ecosystems, access to capital, and ocean plastic.

For ANDE, a key focus is to disseminate learnings and good practices around inclusive entrepreneurship development through webinars and workshops. ANDE East and Southeast Asia chapter organized a joint webinar with DFAT FI and SPF to disseminate the GLIA toolkit to a broader audience in Asia. The GLIA toolkit was also shared with practitioners, ESOs, funders and international NGOs through the ANDE Gender Action Lab in 2021.

3. THE APPROACH

3.1 Practitioner Led

Since its conception, GLIA's development has been led collaboratively by ygap and SPF, with ygap taking the lead on content development of the GLIA Toolkit. As an ESO working globally to both support ventures through acceleration and contribute towards entrepreneurship ecosystem building, ygap has used their team's expertise to create a practical resource.

As the Toolkit and additional resources stemming from GLIA have been focused on Southeast Asia, ygap has built a CoP of ESOs operating within the regional ecosystem, and engaged them in collaboratively developing a resource which is designed by ESOs, for ESOs.

The Development of the GLIA Toolkit

The GLIA Toolkit:

Co-created by 13 organizations
(mostly ESOs delivering incubation and acceleration programs in Asia)

4
Sections
(organization, program, ecosystem, impact measurement)

11
Sub-sections

19
Modules

Contributions have ranged from actively writing chapters and modules, reviewing and providing insights and feedback, and participating in stakeholder workshops and user testing sessions to ensure the resource is practical and useful for its intended audience. After 12-months of initial development, and a further 24-months of testing, feedback and updates, the GLIA Toolkit has been revised and relaunched to ensure it is continuously evolving.

The GLIA Standards for Gender Smart Entrepreneurship Support Organizations

In 2021 the GLIA CoP members, 6 ESOs across 4 countries and led by ygap's GLIA team, co-created a set of 7 Minimum Standards for Gender-Smart Entrepreneurship Support Organizations. The GLIA Standards outline three organizational and four program standards, which GLIA members agree to strive towards, in order to demonstrate best practice in applying a gender lens as inclusive and accessible ESOs.

The Minimum Standards for Gender Smart Entrepreneurship Support Organizations:

Organizational Standards	Members will work towards equal representation and participation from all members of the team.
	Members will review and adapt their internal policies to enable a culture of equality in the workplace.
	Members will work towards creating a culture of belonging and inclusion.
Program Standards	Members will work to ensure that there is equal representation of all genders across participants, facilitators, mentors and any other individuals involved.
	Members will ensure that their program design and curriculum is accessible to and meets the needs of all genders.
	Members will support entrepreneurs to understand how they can apply a gender lens to their organizational management and product/service development.
	Members will consider gender in their impact measurement processes, including data collection, analysis and presentation.

The final Standards have been released as a practical guide for ESOs, outlining each Standard with guidance on reflective questions and adaptation to local context, case studies, examples, suggested metrics, and additional resources.

Alongside developing the GLIA Standards, each of which was co-created by between 1-3 ESOs and reviewed by all 7 participating organizations, the CoP members also tested chosen Standards internally with their teams to improve their own practices.

The GLIA Community of Practice

The GLIA CoP has evolved over the three years since GLIA began, and has a current active network of members that meet monthly and co-create resources, share learnings and pilot new gender-focused initiatives.

There is also a wider CoP network that has been involved in the development of the GLIA Toolkit and testing including ESOs, investors and funders across the region.

GLIA CoP members typically have 1-2 team members from their organization as formal representatives of their ESO, as active CoP members and drivers of developing a culture of gender equality internally within their organizations and programs.

Different organizations have taken different approaches to developing a culture around supporting or actively working towards gender equality. For some interviewed organizations, there was one focal person who specifically developed their knowledge first and then shared that internally, such as ONOW and Phandeeyar (Myanmar). For other organizations such as New Energy Nexus (Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines) and Xchange (Philippines), multiple team members participated in GLIA activities and learned together.

Some organizations, such as SHE (Cambodia) initially used GLIA and participated in the CoP as one individual representative before identifying the need for more team members to be involved to ensure uptake across the organization.

3.2 Creating Space for Experimentation and Adaptation

A key initiative of the GLIA CoP has been supporting members to co-create, and then adapt, test and implement GLIA tools, resources and standards within their ESOs. Creating a space for ESOs to regularly ideate, discuss, share and learn from each other, as well as resourcing pilot initiatives for ESOs to improve their gender practices, has meant creating a culture of experimentation and ultimately measurable change.

It takes significant time and resources to enable genuine reflection, engagement of team members to create safe spaces for open discussion, identifying strengths as well as key areas for growth and improvement in creating gender inclusive teams and programs, however it does allow for longer-term, organizational change. Current GLIA CoP members have been part of this network for three years, and have continuously reflected and built on pilot initiatives to improve their work. The resourcing of these initiatives has been shared between GLIA drivers SPF and ygap in providing small grants to CoP members to test and pilot initiatives, and the CoP members who have dedicated staff and time resources to driving culture change internally.

GIZ's 2022 'Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs: A Handbook for Practitioners' was developed in collaboration with ygap as a resource for their global team and ESO grantees, building on and referencing the GLIA Toolkit. After conducting initial research, GIZ discovered the GLIA Toolkit and rather than creating a repetitive resource they took this existing toolkit and adapted it to their organizational and partner needs.

"Together with ygap and through a collaborative process with different GIZ staff, we have established our own handbook - which is very much inspired by the GLIA toolkit and which draws strongly on the GLIA content." - **GIZ**

3.3 Collaborative

A key theme of GLIA has been a focus on collaboration, from co-creating practitioner-led resources, to building on the GLIA Toolkit to create new and adapted resources for a wider audience. ESOs and funders alike have worked together on a range of initiatives that have been designed to be accessible to as many ESOs and therefore affect as many entrepreneurs as possible.

Collaborative funding partnerships

Working to close gender gaps in entrepreneurship is a long-term endeavor and will require consistent efforts by practitioners to test and contextualize approaches in the field. However, to support these efforts, financial sustainability becomes an important question to be addressed.

The collaboration between SPF and DFAT to combine resources and co-fund GLIA was crucial to kickstart the program in 2018. However, the value of the collaboration organically evolved beyond co-funding of ESO capacity building to incorporate wider themes that were complementary to the mission of both organizations, including promoting gender lens investing and supporting innovation through collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem building over the past 4 years.

Building on GLIA to develop new tools and resources

The GLIA Toolkit has an extensive amount of tools and resources for organizations to use or further build on, and there are multiple examples of organizations which have used GLIA as a foundation or catalyst for the development of new tools and resources.

This can include accelerator programs building on concepts or modules to further develop workshops and curriculum (such as SanThit Accelerator in Myanmar) or large international organizations leveraging the Toolkit to drive gender lens alignment between country programs and stakeholders (such as GIZ).

The power of funding partnerships for gender-smart entrepreneurship ecosystem development

"The objective to explore GLI and build more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems were shared by our two organizations. SPF's close collaboration with Frontier Incubators program and on-going investment in Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration toolkit are seen by DFAT as very valuable contributions and important steps in advancing this work. DFAT also appreciated research funded by SPF, which has filled in some critical gaps in our understanding of the gender lens investing and angel investing landscape in Southeast Asia.

The initial results of DFAT and SPF collaboration were very encouraging and enabled DFAT to further explore inclusive ecosystem building. Our collaboration with SPF has continued through another DFAT-funded program Frontiers Lab Asia (FLA). SPF team has been instrumental in the design phase of this initiative and a critical partner during its implementation, including through a seat on its board. SPF has brought a wealth of experience, expertise and partnerships to the FLA process. Having a partner, such as SPF undoubtedly contributed to the credibility, reputation and higher impact potential of Frontiers Lab Asia.

We recognise that building inclusive entrepreneurial and gender lens investing ecosystems is a long-term effort - one which requires innovative approaches, openness to learning and therefore can be achieved in close collaboration with a variety of organizations. SPF, with their Gender and Innovation programs, including the Asia Women Impact Fund, are undoubtedly such an organization. Looking into the future, it is hoped that this collaboration will continue to create impact in South East Asia."

Climate Change and Sustainability Division, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

"From hearing the feedback from ESOs and other ecosystem stakeholders across Asia on their experiences with GLIA and how they are now thinking about gender in their programs and organizations, it is safe to conclude that the partnership between SPF, DFAT and ygap has been a success. By working closely together on both strategy and program design, we benefited from ygap's intimate knowledge of ESO capacity building and DFAT's broader vision for inclusive private sector development in Asia.

The collaboration with DFAT and ygap fundamentally helped to catalyze the reach and impact of GLIA, bringing a new model of gender-centered ESO support to Asia. It would be fair to say that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the partnership over the past 4 years has helped SPF to deepen our work on inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem development and accelerate progress towards the end goal of closing gender gaps in entrepreneurship and supporting women and minority entrepreneurs in Asia, at scale."

Gender Investment and Innovation Program, SPF.

3.4 Contextualized and Localized

Gender using an intersectional, cross-cultural lens

During the first three years of GLIA, ESOs who have contributed to and tested different aspects of the Toolkit have demonstrated its use in diverse contexts, and some have not only used it to apply or improve gender lens application to different aspects of their work but have also taken a deeper, intersectional and cross-cultural approach. For example, for ESOs that deeply value gender and diversity within their organization, they have taken extra steps to critically analyze how intersectional and inclusive their work really is.

"Through GLIA and the Community of Practice, we've had the opportunity to more deeply reflect on how we view 'gender' as an organization, and how we can do more than focus on supporting women entrepreneurs. We've used the Toolkit to conduct internal gender audits, facilitate team discussions and capacity building on feminism and intersectionality, and we've purposefully worked towards building a more inclusive and diverse workplace and cohorts."

CELIA BOYD, SHE INVESTMENTS

Localizing tools, resourcing and capacity building

The GLIA Training the Trainer (TTT) Program was designed to build the capacity of ESOs within their local ecosystem to improve their own gender equitable practices. By training GLIA Community of Practice members through the TTT Program, those members then contextualize and adapt the GLIA Toolkit and Standards to their country using a local gender equity and cultural lens. This enables the individual ESOs engaged in the TTT Program to not only apply a gender lens to their own work, and for the entrepreneurs they serve, but also supports the ESOs in their local ecosystems to apply a gender lens creating wider impact.

Through the first TTT, which was delivered with Villgro in the Philippines, 5 organizations (including ESOs and government agencies that actively fund entrepreneurship programs work across the country) graduated with strong action plans to take forward. In 2022-2023, a further 8 organizations will participate in GLIA TTT programs delivered across Thailand and Cambodia, increasing the network of trained GLIA partners and practitioners and with the long-term goal of improving the accessibility of entrepreneurship support services for entrepreneurs across Asia, especially women.

4. THE FUTURE

Asia is evolving to cope with the aftermath of the pandemic, with communities across the region embracing new forms of economic empowerment driven by digitalization and technology. This study has taught us that gender equality in entrepreneurship is a goal that a growing community of ESOs, investors and other ecosystem players in Asia are steadily working towards.

Over the past four years, the GLIA program has supported ESOs to conduct user-led, grassroots-based experimentation to develop better strategies and approaches to reach this goal.

This report has highlighted several key success factors, including:

- More intentional efforts made by ESOs to apply different gender lenses to their work and support women, LGBTQIA+, and other minority entrepreneurs more effectively

- An increased appetite to grow and nurture a community of practitioners that can share and learn about gender and entrepreneurship best practices and use cases

- The critical importance of partnerships between practitioners and funders to enable the development of long-term, sustainable solutions to achieve gender-smart entrepreneurial ecosystems

This study also highlighted that many challenges remain. The survey of ESOs and investors from the GLIA network showed that these stakeholders share the same limitations in applying a gender lens to their work, with a lack of human resources (including both staff numbers and capacity, and internal team knowledge) and financial resources being the top two constraints. These shared barriers demonstrate a want and need for increased capacity building and funding to apply GLIA strategies, both internally and to the direct support offered to entrepreneurs.

The survey also indicated that ESOs and investors see the benefits of collaborating to support women and other minority entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. ESOs often hold a unique position in their local ecosystem and can help democratize support to entrepreneurs that need the most assistance. With strong and trusted relationships with entrepreneurs, ESOs are well-positioned to help founders develop their skills and confidence and provide business-focused technical support to help early-stage companies become investment-ready. By taking an intentional approach to developing a larger and more diverse pipeline of entrepreneurs for the local market, ESOs will enable investors to deploy capital and deliver financial returns and social impact more efficiently.

What's next for GLIA

This year we are continuing to build on the GLIA toolkit in order to make it even more accessible as well as expand its reach by:

- Working to improve the user experience and continually strengthen the content provided via the GLIA Toolkit website.

- Training up an additional two country partners to further localize and adapt GLIA to country-specific contexts (Thailand and Cambodia), and support them to provide in-country training in local languages to more ESOs.

- Continuing to build resources and best practices through the GLIA CoP

Opportunities to collaborate on gender-smart entrepreneurial ecosystem development

Women are still disproportionately impacted by social, economic and environmental inequalities, which are only set to grow as a result of climate change and the fourth industrial revolution. To align with and reach the UN SDGs, we need more women owning and leading businesses, industries and economies by 2030 if we want a chance to reach an equitable and sustainable world. For this to happen, we need women to have access to an equal platform when trying to launch, build and grow businesses.

With systemic barriers and bias working against women entrepreneurs, we need to leverage the power of cross-sector collaboration and innovation in order to address these and support women to not only access but also fully engage with appropriate capital, quality support and evolving markets.

We know a number of great initiatives are already underway or in planning mode to address these barriers through one or more of these focus areas. If this is you, we would love to connect and explore opportunities to align, collaborate or partner.

If this is something you would like to explore with us, please reach out to our team **here.**

Future focus areas include:

● Supporting ESO capacity development: supporting ESOs so they can deepen their support for women entrepreneurs to grow and scale their businesses as part of a rapidly evolving ecosystem.

● Increasing and Mobilizing Capital: mobilizing more and appropriate capital to women entrepreneurs to enable them to grow and scale their businesses.

● Being future focussed: in these uncertain times, supporting women entrepreneurs with the skills, capabilities and the enabling environment so they are equipped to scale their businesses and create impact as the world evolves (e.g. fourth industrial revolution)

5. RESEARCH TEAM, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Methodology

This is a joint report co-designed, written and produced by ygap and SPF, from November 2021 – March 2022. Capital Human was commissioned to lead independent data collection and virtual stakeholder interviews.

Additionally, an online survey was conducted from December 2021 - January 2022 with different entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholders including:
Entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs, including incubators and accelerators, n = 24), Ecosystem builders (19), Funders (6), Investors (5), NGOs (4), International agencies (4), Entrepreneurs (3), Financial institutions (1), and Policymakers (1). Survey respondents were located in Southeast Asia (59%, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam), other countries in the Asia-Pacific region (10.35%), US and Canada (12.06%), Africa (6.9%), Latin America (6.9%) and Europe (6.9%).

They held the following positions within their organizations:
board member (14%), management (62%), team member (19%), and other (5%). 61% of respondents self-identified as female, 36% as male and 3% preferred not to answer.

5.2 About the authors

Ygap

Audrey Jean-Baptiste
Director of Strategy and Operations

Audrey leads the development and execution of ygap's 2030 impact strategy. She manages their programmatic teams across Africa, Asia, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and oversees all their new and existing programs, which all aim to make entrepreneurship more inclusive.

This includes large cross sector partnerships and consulting work, as well as philanthropy and grant funded programs. Since 2019, she has led the development of the Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration toolkit as well as all related activities discussed in this report. She has also been the Gender Advisor and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lead as part of a number of projects including ANDE's Gender Equality Action Lab for South and Southeast Asia and Frontiers Lab Asia (DFAT).

Celia Boyd
Head of Program Design

Celia leads the design of ygap's new and pilot initiatives, working with teams across Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Africa. Bringing her expertise in gender, incubation and acceleration, and entrepreneurship impact measurement, from 2022 Celia also leads the GLIA Community of Practice and exciting new initiatives which will continue to make the GLIA Toolkit more accessible for ESOs across Asia, including the adaptation of the Toolkit to an additional two new countries in 2022-2023.

Prior to working with ygap, Celia was co-founder and Managing Director of GLIA Community of Practice member SHE Investments, Cambodia's first and leading incubator-accelerator for women entrepreneurs. Celia has over 12 years of experience in the international development sector, with over 7 years based in Cambodia and working across Southeast Asia focusing specifically on women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship.

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)

Lily Yu
Impact Strategy Expert

Lily leads programme strategy, design and partnerships relating to inclusive, gender-smart entrepreneurial ecosystem development and gender lens investing at SPF.

In 2018, she developed a partnership between SPF and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Scaling Frontier Innovation (SFI) initiative to co-design and co-fund the Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (GLIA) program. On behalf of SPF, she has led the development of GLIA since 2019. She also co-leads the Gender Lens Investing (GLI) Fellowship, a collaboration between SPF, Investing in Women, AVPN and Value for Women; the SanThit Accelerator, an entrepreneurship training program developed in partnership with EME Myanmar and Village Capital; and other Asia-wide gender and innovation projects.

She is a Board Member of DFAT's Frontiers Lab Asia and an Advisory Committee Member of ANDE's Gender Equality Action Lab and Advancing Women's Empowerment Fund.

5.2 About the authors

Capital Human

Manita Ray

Manita Ray is the Founder and Managing Director of Capital Human, a firm working with investors, funders and organizations to integrate gender equity, racial equity, diversity and social inclusion practices. With over 22 years of experience in the private, government, NFP and international development sectors, Manita has worked across APAC, Africa, LATAM, the Arab States and Europe.

As an Engineer, she worked in the Australian renewable energy and infrastructure sectors. Manita led the work for the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Frontier Incubators Program, and was the lead designer of the 'Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit' while she was ygap's immediate past CEO.

Manita was the Gender Lens Investment Advisor to SHE Investments in Cambodia and the Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Advisor for DFAT in the Solomon Islands. Currently, Manita is the Specialist for Financing for Gender Equality at the United Nations Development Program; a lead researcher and designer of the breakthrough project: Australia's Roadmap to Gender Lens Investing; and a Board Director of Pollinate Group and Free to Feed.

Theresa Rajah

Theresa Rajah is Regional Lead (APAC), Gender Equity & Social Inclusion Specialist at Capital Human. Theresa's professional experience spans from legal policy reform through to the development of community engagement programs to support diversity, equity and inclusion.

She has undertaken roles in research and advice, policy design, and project management across all three tiers of government in Australia. In her role with Capital Human, Theresa has led a number of global projects focusing on how organizations can address structural and systemic inequities to improve their diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes.

Theresa also has extensive experience in leading the design of research and analysis programs through a mixed methods approach. Her most recent work includes conducting research to inform the breakthrough 'Australia's Roadmap to Gender Lens Investing' project. In 2019, Theresa was Aide to the Governor of Victoria, the Hon. Linda Dessau AC, providing direct personal service to the State's first female Governor.

5.3 Contributors and GLIA Partners

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- SecondMuse
- SEED Thailand
- *SHE Investments*
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- UN ESCAP
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- *Villgro*
- *Wise*
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*GLIA partners are listed in italic font

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