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Triple Ripple: Unlocking the Power of Catalytic Philanthropy in Asia

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Message From SPF

Asia, characterized by its diversity and complexity, is experiencing rapid economic growth and technological innovation. However, this progress is accompanied by persistent and increasingly complex issues such as economic inequality, health problems, environmental pollution, natural disasters, aging populations, and human rights concerns. In an era where global challenges intersect and amplify each other, the role of philanthropy has never been more crucial.

Tackling these multifaceted issues requires mobilizing resources from all sectors -public, private, non-profit, for-profit, civil society, and academia, and fostering collaboration across national, regional, and sectoral boundaries. Philanthropy, with its long history and unique strengths characterized with patient capital, convening power, and long-term commitment, is uniquely positioned to play a catalytic role in this effort. The Asia Philanthropy Congress (APHIC) was established in 2022 by the Nippon Foundation to bring together key foundation representatives from across Asia to discuss common challenges and solutions. The third congress, set for November 2024 in Tokyo, will continue to explore ways to address societal challenges in Asia, with a spotlight on promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I).

The Social Innovation Program of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation recognizes the crucial role of the philanthropic sector in addressing contemporary social issues. The Program is dedicated to explore innovative and catalytic approaches, especially through supporting social enterprises and creating ecosystems to meet the needs of underserved populations in Southeast Asia. In preparation for the third APHIC, the Program commissioned a study that compiled prominent cases of catalytic roles that philanthropic organizations in six Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand - as well as Japan.



The primary focus of the study is to identify cases where a foundation plays a catalytic role in supporting local regeneration, particularly through social enterprises and to learn from their cases on how they can play such role. It also aims to highlight cases from Japan. As a country advanced in facing and addressing social issues, especially the aging population and declining population in rural areas, we believe that Japan has a lot to showcase to other Asian countries.

It is our fervent hope that this case study will provide valuable insights for fellow foundations and other impact economy ecosystem players, who are diligently working to address the social issues in Asia. We also hope this report will be the first step in starting dialogue and fostering collaboration among philanthropic organizations. By working together, we can take on a catalytic role and accelerate our efforts to achieve a greater and sustainable collective impact.

Itsu Adachi

Executive Director,
The Sasakawa Peace Foundation

About This Report

Commissioned by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, this research aims to identify innovative, effective philanthropic work within the Asian region to promote learning and collaboration among philanthropic actors as well as those in the impact economy ecosystem at large. The research focuses on how the philanthropic sector supports various stakeholders like nonprofits and social enterprises working to address developmental challenges, particularly in rural areas, in various countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

The output of this research is being shared with participants of the Asia Philanthropy Congress (APHIC) in November 2024 in Tokyo and will also be made publicly available. This year's event will be hosted by the Nippon Foundation Group, with the cooperation of the Social Innovation and Investment Foundation (SIIF), the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), the Nippon Foundation, and Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN). As its third rendition, this year's event will focus on the theme of "Working Together to Realize Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I)". The concept of diversity, equity, and inclusion is fundamental to build a society in which no one is left behind and equal pathways for social participation are open to all. In this context, SPF hopes that the insights from this research will help philanthropic actors improve the quality of their initiatives to better serve the populations of the region¹.

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About the Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Established in 1986, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) has worked since its inception to advance international exchange and cooperation. Addressing the diverse and complex issues of the 21st century, it leverages the unique freedom of its status as a private foundation to explore innovative solutions and approaches for addressing a wide range of issues facing the world today in partnership with a diverse community of both domestic and international collaborators.

The five priority goals of the foundation are:

- Stabilizing the international community and strengthening Japan-U.S. relations
- Strengthening strategic relations between Asia and Japan
- Deepening understanding of and strengthening relations with Islamic countries
- Realization of a peaceful world through the ocean
- Fostering international leaders from Japan²

¹ APHIC website: <https://www.aphic.org/en>

² SPF website: <https://www.spf.org/en/about/goals/>

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Building, Malaysia

Yuvabadhana Foundation

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Thailand

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Yoshi Tabuchi, Co-Founder & Co-CEO, Japan

Abbreviations

APHIC	Asia Philanthropy Congress
BFF	Bayan Family of Foundations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DD	Dompot Dhuafa
DEI	Diversity Equity and Inclusion
FEP	Farmer Entrepreneurship Program
GDRN	Government-Linked Companies Demi Rakyat & Negara
GLC	Government Linked Companies
GLIC	Government-Linked Investment Companies
IDEAS	Institute for Development and Islamic Studies
JANPIA	Japan Network for Public Interest Activities
JGF	Jollibee Group Foundation
JPY	Japanese Yen
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIM	Measurement and Impact Management
MFLF	Mae Fah Luang Foundation
NF	Nippon Foundation
PO	Program Officer
PR	Public Relations
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIIF	Social Innovation and Investment Foundation
SPF	Sasakawa Peace Foundation
UHNWI	Ultra High Net Worth Individuals
USD	United States Dollar
WEF	World Economic Forum
WLF	William & Lily Foundation
YH	Yayasan Hasanah
YTM	Yayasan TM

Executive Summary

The world is becoming increasingly fragmented as it enters the post-pandemic era, particularly in Asia, where addressing vulnerabilities and insecurities is vital for achieving social, economic, and developmental targets, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite significant economic growth that has improved living standards, reaching ambitious targets requires innovative and collaborative efforts beyond financial resources. Traditional approaches need to be supplemented with inclusive, cross-sectoral frameworks to create comprehensive solutions.

Catalytic philanthropy emerges as a promising method for foundations to contribute to social and economic development, focusing on sustainable,

systemic change rather than short-term fixes. By supporting initiatives across various sectors, catalytic philanthropists use diverse tools to maximize impact, engaging with different sectors to create ripple effects beyond individual projects.

In Asia, the philanthropic sector is evolving, fueled by emerging wealth and growing social consciousness. This report examines the work of 15 philanthropic initiatives in seven Asian countries, highlighting their catalytic roles in areas like education, health, and agriculture. These organizations foster multi-sectoral partnerships that provide holistic support, including technical expertise, capacity building, and networking, aimed at addressing social and economic disparities.

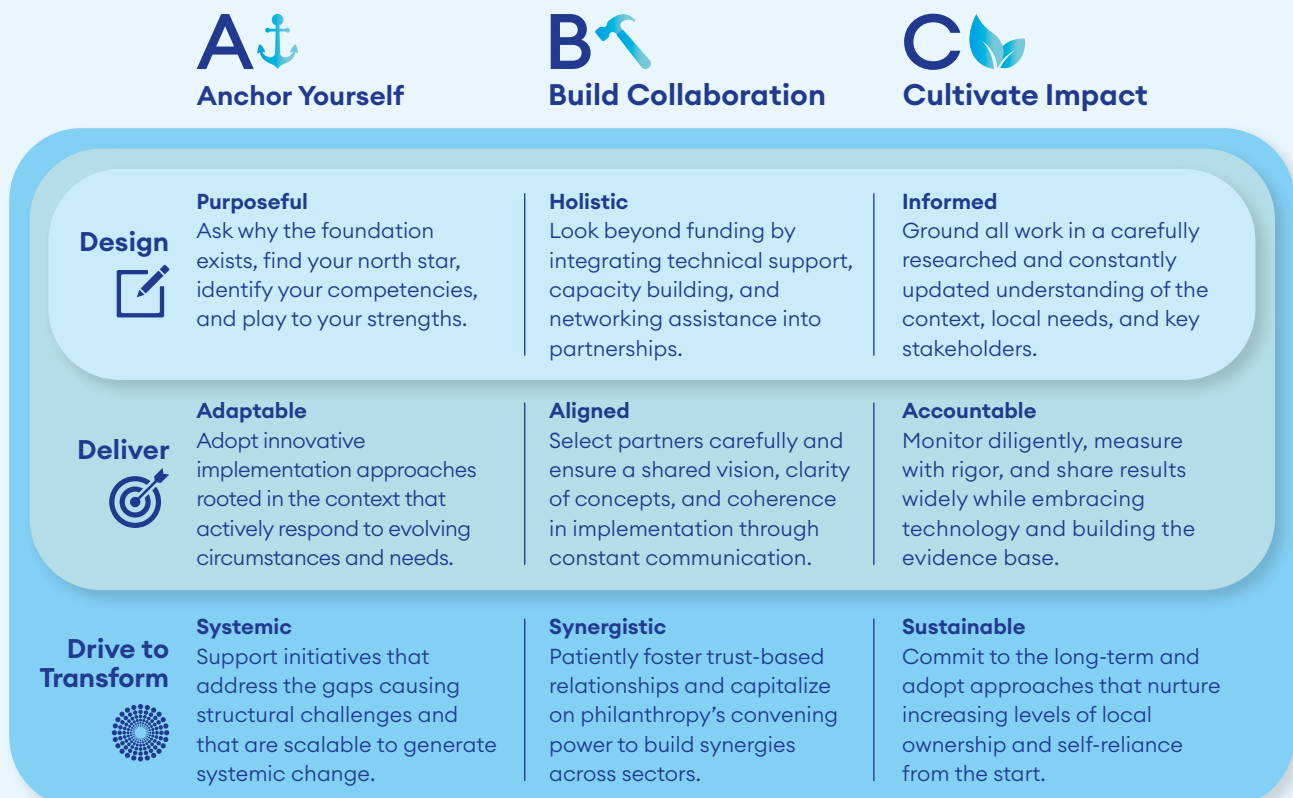


Figure 1: A 3 x 3 matrix distilling the essences of catalytic philanthropy in Asia

Building on recent literature and primary research, this report introduces a nine-element model of catalytic philanthropy, organized in a three-by-three matrix. This model features three vertical dimensions: Anchoring in Purpose, Building Collaboration, and Cultivating Impact, along with three horizontal dimensions: Design, Delivery, and Drive-to-Transform.

Anchoring in Purpose emphasizes that philanthropic actors must be purposeful, adaptable, and systemic to catalyze change. A clear north star guides initiatives, while adaptability allows for responsiveness to evolving community needs. Systemic approaches aim to tackle root causes of social issues, ensuring initiatives are scalable and transformative.

Building Collaboration stresses the importance of partnerships that extend beyond financial support. A holistic approach incorporates funding alongside technical support and capacity building, enhancing the resilience of grantees. Alignment among partners is crucial for maintaining a shared vision, while synergistic collaborations leverage philanthropy's unique position to engage diverse stakeholders, fostering trust and long-term systemic impact.

Cultivating Impact focuses on sustaining a results-oriented approach throughout project phases. Foundations should be informed, accountable, and sustainable, relying on thorough research and local insights. Transparency and rigor can build trust while ensuring initiatives remain effective. Sustainability requires fostering local ownership and integrating practices within communities to ensure ongoing benefits.

The model can also be viewed horizontally, prioritizing three elements at the design stage (purposeful, holistic, informed), six at the delivery stage (adding adaptable, synergistic, and accountable), and integrating all nine in the drive to transform. By combining these nine elements, catalytic philanthropy can drive systemic change, setting an example for impactful interventions in global philanthropy.

Ultimately, this report underscores the transformative potential of catalytic philanthropy in Asia, emphasizing its ability to amplify social impact, support scalable models, and lay the groundwork for sustainable development. Funded by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), the report aims to strengthen the evidence base for catalytic philanthropy in Asia.

By documenting best practices and insights from diverse philanthropic actors, it encourages regional collaboration and network-building to advance catalytic efforts. This research contributes to the growing potential of the region to lead in addressing global challenges through innovative and responsive philanthropic approaches.

Introduction

Finding Multidimensional Solutions to the World's Polycrisis

“The cascading and connected crises we find ourselves in demand a new descriptor to define the scale of the problems the world is facing. Present and future risks can also interact with each other to form a ‘polycrisis’ – a cluster of related global risks with compounding effects, such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part”

- World Economic Forum Global Risk Report³

As the world increasingly confronts the post-pandemic economic, political, environmental and social challenges, often referred to as a “polycrisis”, enveloping the globe, the need for Asian countries to act to elevate the wellbeing of their people becomes increasingly important. Linked to this, 2030 is quickly approaching, encouraging many nations to assess their advancement towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While much progress has been made, too many people in the world are still suffering from insecurities related to their basic needs and these vulnerabilities are only being magnified by the current global instability and uncertainty. The achievement of the SDGs extends beyond bridging the well-known funding gaps⁴

that exist and includes the need for comprehensive support for opportunities that respond to local needs. This combination of financial and technical support cannot be achieved by governments alone.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the public, not-for-profit, philanthropic, and private sectors, addressing these gaps requires innovative, collaborative, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approaches to economic and social priorities. It requires embarking on a collaborative journey with all actors playing their role in and reaping the benefits from lifting citizens out of poverty, increasing economic opportunities, creating more purchasing power to drive local business and expanding the tax base for the further provision of essential social services. The role of the philanthropic sector in this journey is significant.

The Role of Catalytic Philanthropy

“Simply put: Catalytic philanthropy is an approach practiced by innovative funders to create transformative change beyond writing the check. Truly catalytic philanthropists often ‘punch above their (financial) weight’ by leveraging their voice, community relationships, and non-grantmaking skills such as convening and capacity building to drive social change.”

- FSG⁵

3 WEF <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2023/digest>

4 “It will require between \$5 and \$7 trillion annually in global SDG-oriented investment, and that annual private capital flows to SDG-oriented projects and impact enterprises would need to be as much as \$1.8 trillion higher than they are today in developing countries alone” (Tideline)

5 FSG <https://www.fsg.org/blog/what-catalytic-philanthropy>

Moving beyond the traditional capitalist economic benchmarks that prioritize financial returns, philanthropic actors around the world are increasingly adopting a more long-term, broader perspective. Underlying this movement is a spirit of collaboration across sectors to maximize the effect of their work and target their support to stimulate systemic changes for a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable world. This spirit of collaboration is also permeating the philanthropic sector. Whereas in the past, philanthropic actors may have been focused on their individual projects and had a much more narrow focus, there is an increasing realization that collaborative efforts can result in more systemic and sustainable impacts. In order to maximize their impact, philanthropic investors and organizations are increasingly looking to play a catalytic role, whereby their actions, interventions, projects and investments result in a ripple effect catalyzing much larger results chains and activating larger market systems.

The understanding of a catalytic philanthropy that is **purposeful, adaptable, systemic, holistic, aligned, synergistic, informed, accountable and sustainable** is redefining how philanthropy is practiced around the world. It can take financial and non-financial forms, but the underlying purpose remains the same: to trigger an effect beyond the immediate results of a particular project or initiative to impact society as a whole. This can be accomplished in many ways including by linking a specific initiative with the work of other actors to achieve larger societal goals or by addressing key gaps that impede the fulfilment of large scale societal initiatives.

By addressing underserved populations, supporting innovative models, and driving sustainable development outcomes, catalytic philanthropy offers the possibility to amplify social impact, support scaling and set the stage for long-term financial sustainability.

Catalytic philanthropy emerged as an idea over 15 years ago, through the work of Mark Kramer which highlighted four essential practices that set it apart from traditional philanthropy. These include taking responsibility for achieving results, mobilizing a campaign for change, using all available tools, and creating actionable knowledge⁶. A few years later, Leslie Crutchfield, John Kania, and Mark Kramer further expanded on this idea in their book *Do More Than Give*, identifying six practices of donors who truly drive social change. These practices include advocating for change, blending profit with purpose, forging nonprofit networks, empowering people, leading adaptively, and learning to create change⁷. Catalytic philanthropist are driven forward by the twin concepts of intentionality and additionality to go beyond financial contributions, using their influence, networks, and non-grantmaking skills to create transformative social impact, often achieving results that exceed their financial contributions.

This research builds on these foundational ideas and applies them in the Asian context, exploring how catalytic philanthropy is evolving in 2024 and how it can be optimally utilized to achieve even more transformative results in the future.

6 SSIR https://ssir.org/articles/entry/catalytic_philanthropy#

7 FSG https://www.fsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Do_More_Than_Give.pdf

Catalytic Philanthropy in Asia

Asia is a continent of stark contrasts. It is home to more billionaires than any other part of the world and its economy is the fastest growing of any region in the world. It is also home to more than 233 million people who live on less than US\$1.90 a day, 370.7 million people are undernourished, and 2.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water.”

- Bridgespan Group⁸

Asia has the potential to stand at the forefront of this catalytic philanthropy movement. While the philanthropic sector isn't as developed or mature as in parts of Europe and North America, there are established actors in the field and the rapidly growing economies of the region are generating many more ultra-high net worth individuals who have a strong social conscience and are driven by the values of their societies to contribute and give back to society⁹. This philanthropic sectoral growth, a commitment to impact and an openness to experimentation presents the Asia region with the chance to drive catalytic philanthropy, and more broadly, the philanthropic landscape forward through innovative, collaborative and committed action alongside other players and sectors.

As they do, it's important that stock taking is done to assess what is working well, what can be improved, and what opportunities for greater collaboration exist.

This research report explores the catalytic work being undertaken by 15 foundations playing a philanthropically catalytic role in funding and technical support in 7 diverse countries across the Asia region. By exploring such diverse geographies and actors at various stages of their developmental journeys, it is possible to capture the commonalities of best practices that span the entire region while also understanding the differences that exist within each context. The work of these organizations ranges from several years to several decades in sectors ranging from education, health, tourism to agriculture. Some are private foundations, while others are linked to corporate entities or governments. As such, the organizations also have a range of different implementation and granting models targeting initiatives and enterprises that are at various stages of development: from seeding, scaling to sustaining. They work with urban and rural communities, children, youth and adults.

While not fully exhaustive given the size and diversity of the continent as a whole, these actors and their work present a good reflection of the philanthropic work being undertaken across Asia across a wide range of contexts addressing a wide range of issues. The catalytic philanthropy space is an area that is still emerging and requires a greater weight of evidence to ensure that optimal results are delivered for beneficiaries across the region.

⁸ Bridgespan Group, High-Impact Philanthropy: Giving Better Across Asia and the World

⁹ Altrata's Ultra High Net Worth Philanthropy 2024 report estimates philanthropic giving by ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs) in Asia will reach approximately USD 33 billion, accounting for 17% of total global UHNWI giving, compared to USD 91 billion, or 48% of global giving, in the US. The region's share of global UHNWI wealth is expected to reach 29% (up from 27% in 2022 and just 15% in 2004), driving the rapid expansion of philanthropic giving.

The uniqueness of the Asian philanthropic landscape, and the uniqueness of Asia in general, further underscores the need to explore region-specific data.

While some work has been done to develop the Asian catalytic philanthropy evidence base, there is still much more to do. Thanks to the contributions of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), this report aims to

contribute to the development of the evidence base while helping philanthropic actors across Asia become even more catalytic with their work. By exploring the work that these organizations have done, their best practices and lessons learned, the authors hope that shared understandings can be developed, areas of collaboration can be found, and networks can be developed across the region going forward.



Photo by Dan Freeman on Unsplash

Scope

This research aims to explore the catalytic philanthropy landscape across the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on identifying key players, best practices, and lessons learned. While there are many definitions for catalytic philanthropy and catalytic funding in use by various

organizations across the world, this research focuses on the word “catalytic” in a broad sense and explores how philanthropic actors can be optimally effective through their work by triggering a ripple effect whose benefits extend beyond the immediate confines of their work to affect the larger community or society.

Figure 2: Locations of organizations interviewed



By including foundations with state, corporate and private linkages working across a wide range of sectors at various stages of the seeding, scaling and sustaining process, efforts were made to identify practices and trends of the greatest applicability to the region as a whole.

Through a cross-sectional study of seven countries, this research seeks to provide case studies that illustrate the diversity of work being done by organizations striving to be catalytic actors, specifically in the areas of rural issues. By examining a range of actors and projects, the research aims to showcase how catalytic actors are unlocking new opportunities and addressing economic, social and environmental challenges in the region through their work.

The research is structured around three key questions which clearly delineate the scope of this exercise:

1. **Role:** What role do philanthropic foundations and other key actors play in their landscapes?
2. **Catalytic:** How can philanthropic actors act as catalysts to unlock potential and address barriers in the impact investing space?
3. **Rural:** How can catalytic philanthropy be applied to tackle specific challenges in rural areas?

Given the region's size and diversity, this research cannot cover the entire Asian continent comprehensively.

By choosing 15 illustrative case studies of catalytic philanthropy from seven countries in the region, it does, however, provide a valuable snapshot of the catalytic philanthropy space. While this research only accounts for the perspective of catalytic philanthropists and does not directly include the voices of funding recipients or beneficiaries, each philanthropic organization consulted has robust feedback and monitoring systems that capture these voices.

As such, examining the work of some of the most high profile and effective Asian philanthropic actors, across a range of economic and social contexts, has led to findings that are both diverse and relevant. The quality and consistency of the responses, the reputability of the actors interviewed, and the quality of partnerships have led the authors to valuable insights. The insights from these countries have been linked to broader regional and global trends, allowing for the extrapolation of key themes that hold relevance for catalytic philanthropy throughout the region.

By making an important addition to the growing body of evidence on catalytic philanthropy, this research aims to provide insights that can guide future efforts, including more effective collaboration between catalytic philanthropists, ultimately supporting more sustainable development and social progress driven by catalytic philanthropists in Asia.

Organization name	Country	Founding Year	Sectoral Focus										
			Agriculture	Arts & Culture	Community Development	Disaster Relief	DE&I	Economic Empowerment	Education	Environment	Health	Policy & Innovation	Talent Development
Bayan Family of Foundations	Philippines	1993						✓	✓			✓	
Dumpet Duafah	Indonesia	1993				✓		✓	✓		✓		
Fukutake Fondation	Japan	2004		✓	✓								
GDRN	Malaysia	2014		✓	✓	✓							
JANPIA	Japan	2018			✓		✓	✓					
Jollibee Foundation	Philippines	2005	✓			✓		✓	✓				
Lorinet Foundation	Singapore	2017			✓			✓	✓				
Mae Fah Luang Foundation	Thailand	1969						✓		✓			
Pijar Foundation	Indonesia	2022					✓		✓	✓			✓
PwC Foundation	Japan	2020	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rumah Foundation	Singapore	2018								✓			
Smart Axiata	Cambodia	2013			✓			✓	✓				✓
William & Lily Foundation	Indonesia	2009						✓	✓				
Yayasan Hasanah	Malaysia	2015		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		
Yuvabadhana Foundation	Thailand	1992							✓		✓		✓

GDRN = Government-Linked Companies Demi Rakyat & Negara
 JANPIA = Japan Network for Public Interest Activities

* Table updated in May 2025

Figure 3: Overview of organizations interviewed

Methodology

This research employed an inductive, qualitative, utilization-focused¹⁰ approach to explore the catalytic philanthropy landscape in Asia. Through desk research, literature review, and key informant interviews (KIIs), the authors aimed to identify key themes, best practices, and lessons learned to inform findings and recommendations that would improve practices and impacts within the sector.

First, the research process began with comprehensive discussions with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation to establish a common understanding of definitions, approaches and scope. Building on this, desk research and a literature review of relevant resources with regional and global relevance were conducted to understand the latest trends and context.

Keyplayers and experts in the Asia catalytic philanthropy space were then identified and engaged through a comprehensive desk research and outreach process. Initial leads and indications of foundations worthy of inclusion were verified by checking with leading players in the sector across the region. Preliminary interviews were conducted with these experts to identify prominent and innovative organizations engaged in catalytic philanthropy in the target countries.

Once this was validated with SPF, an interview guide was developed to ensure consistency in the semi-structured interviews. After field testing of the guide, a total of 15 interviews were conducted with foundations and organizations involved in catalytic philanthropy, enabling a comprehensive understanding of their roles, strategies, and challenges.

The data gathered from these interviews was then subject to a thematic analysis to identify key highlights, points of emphasis, and takeaways that emerged from multiple interviewees. The results were then cross-checked with the desk research to assess alignment with regional and global trends in catalytic philanthropy. They were also validated with key actors within the sector in the region.

The key themes and concepts were then organized into a 3x3 matrix to highlight the 9 key themes that emerged from the research, with each concept linked to multiple interviews as well as secondary data. Through this rigorous and comprehensive methodological approach, the research offers a rich, contextual understanding of the catalytic philanthropy landscape in Asia.



Figure 4: Four key methodological steps of this research

¹⁰ Rooted in the work of Michael Quinn Patton, a utilization focused approach is designed to maximize utility to its intended audience, in this case catalytic philanthropic actors. See the Reference Section for full citation of his work in this area.

Key Findings

As described in the Introduction, this research builds on the existing knowledge of catalytic philanthropy and applies them in the Asian context, exploring how catalytic philanthropy is evolving in 2024 and how it can be optimally utilized to achieve even more transformative results in the future.

What does catalytic philanthropy in Asia look like?

Based on the primary and secondary research conducted, the authors propose the following 3 by 3 framework to understand catalytic philanthropy. The matrix outlines the importance of catalytic work to be anchored, collaborative, and impactful at the design, delivery, and drive-to-transform phases.

The ABC components of the matrix, “Anchor Yourself”, “Build Collaboration” and “Cultivate Impact” are non-linear and must all be borne in mind through all phases of an initiative.

The other axis of the matrix, which focuses on the design, delivery, and drive-to-transform phases of an initiative, is more linear and outlines the essential components that foundations must bear in mind when engaged in the various phases of their work. The design phase contains the elements of being **purposeful, holistic, and informed**. These three elements should be retained when moving to the delivery phase, while integrating the elements of **adaptability, alignment, and accountability**. Finally at the drive-to-transform phase, where the majority of

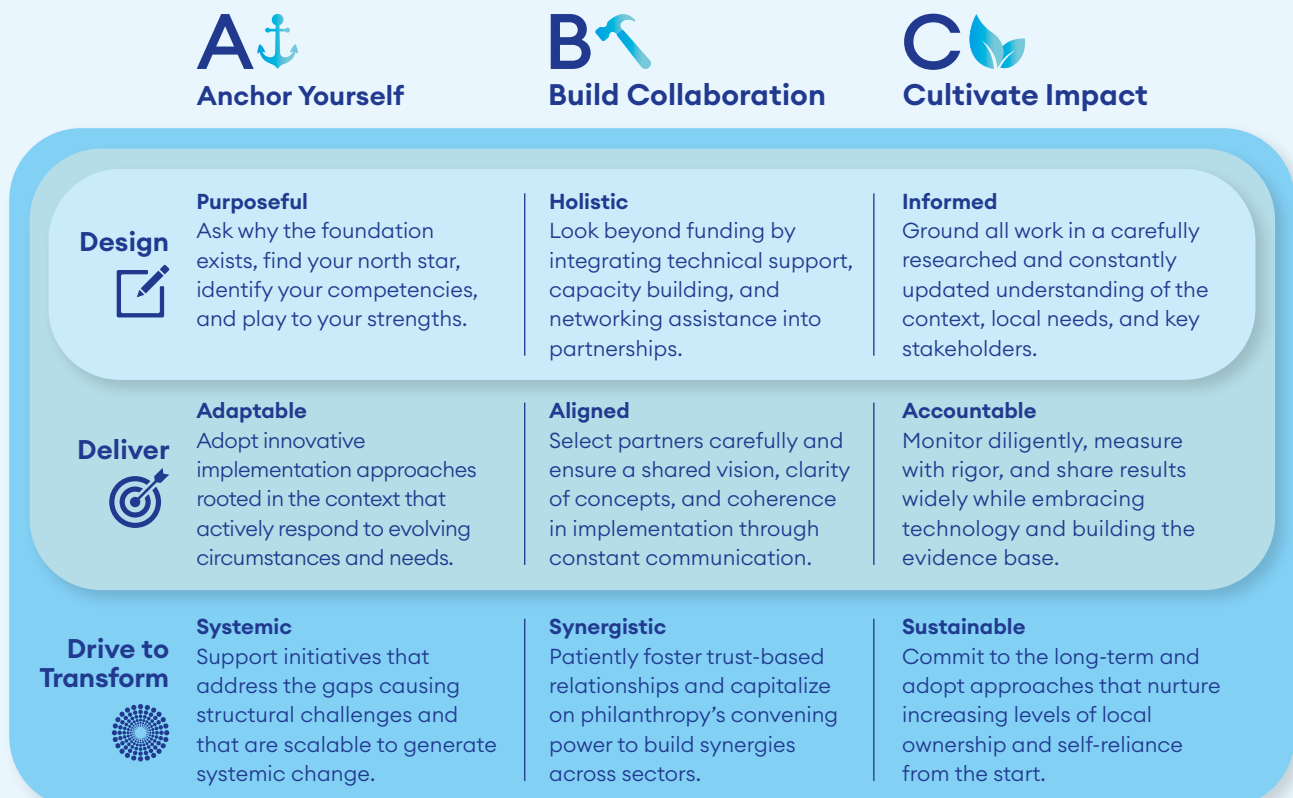


Figure 5: A 3 x 3 matrix distilling the essences of catalytic philanthropy in Asia

transformational catalytic work takes place, all nine elements are necessary, with the **systemic, synergistic and sustainable** elements added to the previous six. When taken together, these nine elements provide a solid roadmap that can help guide foundations to ensure that their work creates a ripple effect.

The design and content of this matrix are rooted in the primary research undertaken by the research team for this report and build upon the latest global and region-specific literature in the area of catalytic philanthropy. In particular, it has drawn from recent publications by the Bridgespan Group, Institute of Philanthropy, McKinsey, USAID, AVPN, the Catalytic Capital Consortium, and a number of others. These include:

- The 2024 Bridgespan Group report¹¹ on high impact philanthropy proposed a five-part framework for high-impact philanthropy containing useful elements that influenced the impact section of the matrix.
- The 2024 Institute of Philanthropy and McKinsey report on ‘Examining Trust and Measurement in Asian Philanthropy’¹² was useful in that it highlighted the importance of both trust and measurement which underpinned a number of elements included in the matrix.
- The work of the Catalytic Capital Consortium focuses more on catalytic capital rather than the more broader realm of catalytic philanthropy, but their resources on best practices at the seeding, scaling and sustaining roles of catalytic capital informed several elements of the matrix.

- The theory of change and lessons learned sections of the 2023 USAID report on ‘Mobilizing Funding for Development with Catalytic Funding’¹³ also provided valuable insights into the construction of the matrix even though its focus was on catalytic funding rather than catalytic philanthropy in general.

By taking the most relevant elements from each of these excellent works of research and combining them with the primary data obtained from interviewing 15 philanthropic actors across 7 countries in Asia, the authors believe that they have arrived at a useful framework for the ecosystem at large.

Matrix Limitations

It is important to note what this matrix is not. This matrix is not a checklist but more of a guide that must be interpreted by each philanthropic actor to suit their particular context. This idea of local adaptability came out strongly from most of the interviewees when referring to their work and must be applied to general frameworks like this matrix as well.

Given the size and social, economic and cultural diversity of Asia, there is no one size fits all approach that will work for everyone in every circumstance at every time. For example, something that works in Thailand may not always work in Japan, but the Thai example may hold valuable lessons that could apply in the Japanese context and spur innovations to test new ideas.

¹¹ Bridgespan Group, High-Impact Philanthropy: Giving Better Across Asia and the World

¹² Institute of Philanthropy and McKinsey, Examining Trust and Measurement in Asian Philanthropy

¹³ USAID, Mobilizing Funding for development with Catalytic Funding

Nevertheless, having these nine elements as guides can help philanthropic actors have important discussions and make key decisions about their plans, projects and approaches when seeking to be catalytic in all contexts. In certain situations, like those where governments may not be as amenable to collaborations, such political realities could mean that one or more of the elements may not apply or be weighted to a lesser degree. Nevertheless, the authors believe that if any elements are glaringly missing in philanthropic work, then the likelihood of a catalytic effect being generated may not be as high.

It must also be noted that multiple elements outlined in the matrix have areas of overlap with each other and are largely complementary. The intention was to make the nine elements as mutually exclusive as possible, but inevitably there are some overlapping areas - as there should be. For example, there is an intimate connection between initiatives that are informed, adaptable, and accountable, as the monitoring work undertaken in order to remain accountable facilitates an informed approach and provides the rationale and evidence for adaptations to be made.

The goal was to make each element comprehensively exhaustive, but time and space constraints dictated that there are certain characteristics that aren't fully covered by the nine. Innovation, for example, is covered under various headings but could have been isolated and highlighted more intentionally if the focus of the research was slightly different. Furthermore, some cross-cutting themes like gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and climate change, while vital and important to factor into all nine of the elements, are beyond the scope of this research.

Matrix Possibilities

Having adopted a utilization-focused approach, the authors aimed to make this matrix a guide - rooted in the latest literature, best practices and lessons learned - that is as simple and easy to understand as possible. While its primary sources are established foundations and the hope is that it is useful to them in shaping future opportunities, these findings were consolidated in a way to be accessible to anyone, even those who are starting new philanthropic initiatives. Having a guide such as this can inform their initial decision making processes and help them avoid some of the pitfalls that other philanthropic actors have made by omission or commission.

Driven by the utilization-focused approach, the authors attempted to make the matrix, and the nine elements that it contains, as easy to remember as possible so that it can be used by a wide variety of practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds and even adapted to suit their particular circumstances.

The authors hope this matrix serves as a useful guide and that it also makes a contribution to the evidence base for catalytic philanthropy in Asia. As a tool that captures the reality of catalytic philanthropy in Asia at the present moment, it must remain a living document, one that evolves to the changing circumstances and diverse realities within the catalytic space in the region.

A - Anchor Yourself

The first dimension of effective catalytic philanthropy highlights the importance of foundations anchoring themselves and grounding their work in **purposeful, adaptable and systemic** approaches. By committing to being purposeful, adaptable and systemic a philanthropic actor clearly sets out its scope for action, its flexibility to shift within that scope to accommodate the context and evolving circumstances and its commitment to address structural gaps in concert with systems-level players and mechanisms.

This anchoring provides a strong foundation to build upon at the *design, delivery* and *drive to transform* phases of an initiative and forms the base from which the ripple effect will flow.

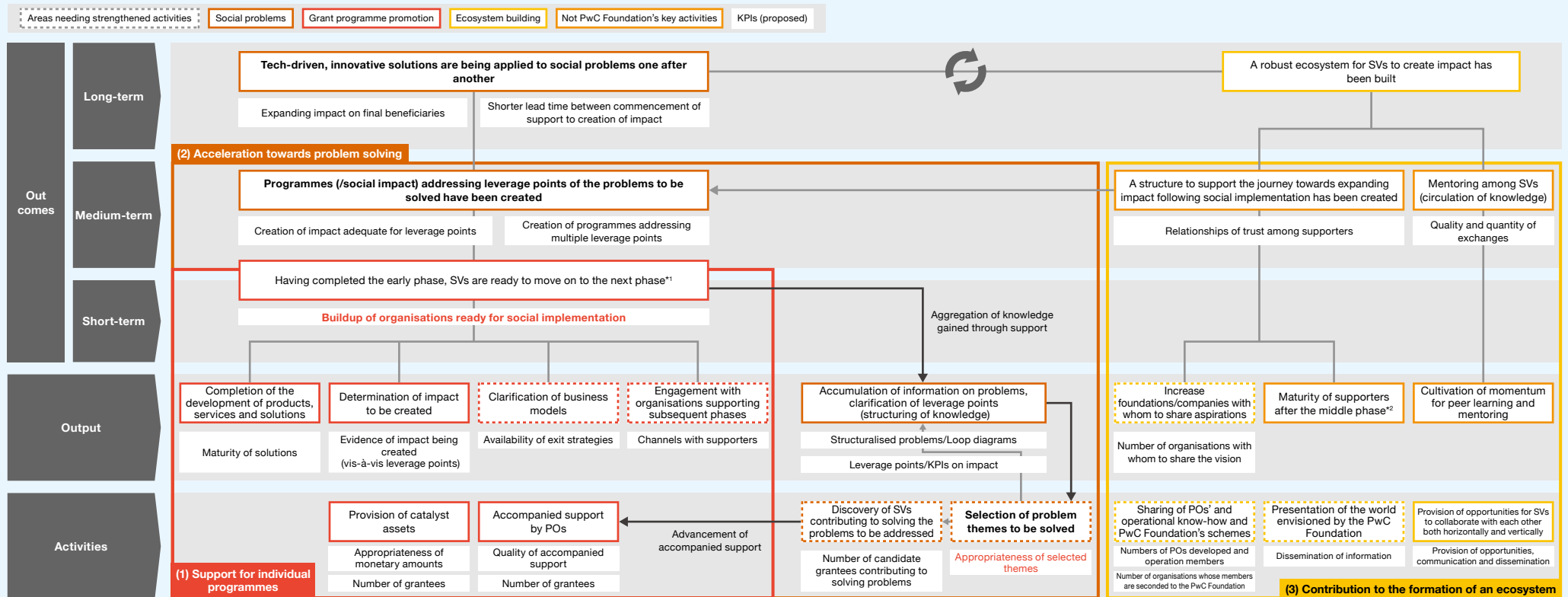
A-1 Purposeful

Purposeful

Ask why the foundation exists, find your north star, identify your competencies, and play to your strengths.

Philanthropic initiatives seeking to be catalytic should always ensure their *design is anchored* in **purposefulness**. They should be intentional about their work rooting it in their objectives and in their core competencies. In this model, purposefulness has two dimensions: identifying and sticking to one's vision in their initiatives and identifying and playing to one's strengths.

Firstly, philanthropic actors should have a clear understanding about their “north star”, their purpose for existing, and their reasons for undertaking catalytic support for initiatives. This vision can be articulated in a Theory of Change like the PwC Foundation or an organizational values statement like the Rumah Foundation.



¹ Grantees, including joint-stock companies in the seed and early phases, as well as NPOs/NGOs, complete the early phase (social implementation completed).

² Fostering a culture where VCs, impact investors, financial institutions, local governments, companies, etc., can proactively support SVs in strengthening their economic foundations and creating impact in the middle phase. It also means that seamless support is offered between phases as relationships between VCs and the PwC Foundation, as well as VCs and financial institutions, are cemented.

Figure 6: PwC Foundation's Theory of Change¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://www.pwc.com/jp/en/about/member/pwc-foundation/impact-report.html>

RUMAH

• FOUNDATION •

Family values

Beyond what we do, how we do it is just as important to us. We care about having integrity and sustainability, which are the foundation of our approach; providing quality in the projects that we deliver, regardless of commerciality; having a strong learning culture in every project that we embark on; and bringing passion to our work, no matter where we are.

Figure 7: Rumah Group clearly states its values which include integrity, sustainability, and learning¹⁵

It can be easy to be pulled in many directions, especially when there are so many visible and immediate needs, but ensuring every initiative and action undertaken aligns with the overall vision of the philanthropic organization is essential. In the words of Dumpet Dhuafa “By keeping these at the core, organizations can ensure consistent alignment between the work they are undertaking and their overall objectives.”

Maintaining clarity of vision and purpose even when there are changing circumstances helps organizations stick to their core strengths. In the words of the Fukutake Foundation, “Changing local circumstances, rotating actors, and organizational evolutions can lead to a lack of clarity when developing new projects.

By consistently ensuring alignment to the original vision and the community’s needs, evolution and development can continue without the loss of direction and purpose.” While visions can change over time, this is usually the result of deliberate strategic reviews rooted in substantial experiences and lessons learned.

Experimentation and innovation are essential and adaptations based on contexts, needs and stakeholders will prove necessary, but organizations have to be mindful that these acts do not spread them too thin or draw them out of their core focus areas to end up causing what’s known as “mission drift”.

Building upon this, organizations should purposefully root their interventions in their core areas of competencies and strengths to ensure optimal effectiveness and to narrow their scope. There are often other players and actors available who specialize in supplementary areas and playing to collective strengths can lead to greater results.

For example, consider the Jollibee Group, one of the fastest growing Asian restaurant companies in the world, headquartered in Metro Manila, Philippines. Its social responsibility arm, the Jollibee Group Foundation, focuses on food security that is tied to their core business. In the words of the JGF’s President, “Know what you are good at and concentrate your efforts on those areas.” Tapping into the excellence of partner organizations with strengths in other areas can allow you to focus on your core competencies.

Another organization that has purposefully built its approach from competencies and strengths is the PwC Foundation.

¹⁵ <https://www.rumahgroup.com/>

The PwC Foundation seeks to leverage the skills and knowledge of program officers, seconded from other entities of the PwC Japan Group, to collaboratively solve problems with grantees using specialized technology and expertise. These members dedicate their partial working hours for these initiatives, closely engaging with the daily operations and activities of the recipient organizations.

In Malaysia, Government-Linked Companies Demi Rakyat & Negara (GDRN) astutely noted that every organization has finite resources and by purposefully concentrating efforts in areas of strength, a results focus can be maintained. This purposefulness linked to organizational competencies is perhaps best summed up by the Fukutake Foundation when its representative stated, “Determine what your foundation can and cannot do, what it is good at and what it is not good at. It is best to focus on your own strengths, and tap into the strengths and capabilities of other stakeholders to fill gaps and areas of weakness.”

As these examples have shown, a philanthropic organization’s purposefulness is an essential ingredient in it being intentionally catalytic with its work.

A-2 Adaptable

Adaptable

Adopt innovative implementation approaches rooted in the context that actively respond to evolving circumstances and needs.

Philanthropic organizations seeking to be catalytic should always ensure their *design and delivery is anchored* in **adaptability**. While adherence to vision is crucial, it is important to retain a degree of flexibility

within that scope to ensure that initiatives are meeting needs and suitable to the context. To put simply, it’s about balancing strategic tenacity and tactical flexibility. Specifically, flexibility in this context refers to malleability of design, adaptability to evolving circumstances, and conduciveness to innovation.

Flexibility within the scope of an organization’s vision and competencies is crucial when designing projects. As the Jollibee Group Foundation representative explained “While being rooted in your vision and core strengths, there is still the need for flexibility and adaptability, as standardized approaches will not work in every context with all actors”. This adaptation to the local circumstances and systems in planning prevents prescriptive, top-down approaches that are ill-suited to particular contexts.

The Director of William & Lily Foundation noted that while philanthropists may have specific implementation approaches in mind, maintaining the flexibility to invest in people and organizations rather than specific projects can be transformative. Projects can always be modified but the people and organizational cultures behind them are much harder to change. They have found that overly prescriptive approaches they employed in the past often failed to account for local sensitivities and specificities. The foundation is much more adaptable now and open to its partners playing a key role in project design within the framework of a larger pre-defined scope. It also notes that while many players focus on capacity gaps especially in under-resourced rural areas, valuable knowledge and skills exist in local communities. Moving to an adaptable approach that is open to leveraging these local knowledge and skills, while still providing support for areas for improvement, can lead to more sustainable results.

By designing initiatives in a way that responds to local needs and systems and involving actors in project

design, there is a much greater chance of stakeholder buy-in. Dompét Dhuafa offers five core areas of support in its programming (education, health, economic development, social development and culture) and makes a decision which areas to prioritize and how to implement initiatives in those areas based on the local circumstances.

They are confident that this planning flexibility allows them to achieve more sustainable and lasting results.

Once an initiative is up and running, it is also important to retain a degree of flexibility to allow for adaptation in implementation. The Lorinet Foundation observed that it has found that flexible funding models help grantees



Our Programs

Dompét Dhuafa has 5 main program categories that have a big goal to alleviate poverty



Health



Economic Empowerment



Education



Social



Da'wah and Culture



Waqf



Figure 8: Dompét Dhuafa delivers support to communities in five dimensions from health, economy, education, social, to culture¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://www.dompethuafa.org/en/home/>

become more resilient in the long term especially if the funding can be more responsive to the needs of grantees and changing circumstances. This flexibility can also lead to improved results, especially when linked to an organization's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. JANPIA highlighted that having robust M&E systems in place provides it with the information it needs to make the needed adaptations in its initiatives to address the results on the ground, the feedback from stakeholders, and to ensure accountability to the public.

A final strength of employing an adaptable approach in design and implementation is that creates a fertile ground for innovation. In design, both Dompot Dhuafa and JANPIA capitalized innovative opportunities within their respective environments. For Dompot Dhuafa this involved tapping into the possibilities of Islamic philanthropic funds in Indonesia, while for JANPIA, this involved the use of Japan's dormant bank accounts to help fund priority social programs. As JANPIA shared, "Given Japan's aging population and the government's limited financial resources, there is an increasing need to find innovative ways of providing needed social services." When looking at implementation, the Jollibee Group Foundation and Smart Axiata noted the importance of purposeful innovation and experimentation to develop effective initiatives.

Adaptability across design and delivery within the scope of one's vision and competencies permits a degree of responsiveness and flexibility that paves the way for catalytic action.

A-3 Systemic

Systemic

Support initiatives that address the gaps causing structural challenges and that are scalable to generate systemic change.

Philanthropic organizations seeking to act catalytically should ensure that their *design, delivery and drive to transform are all anchored* in a **systemic** approach that addresses structural challenges. While it requires more preparatory groundwork and a greater investment of time and effort at the outset, integrating systemic approaches and having an ecosystem of players alongside from the planning stage through the implementation stage paves the way for future scalability.

Working within systems is not always easy, and incorporating systemic collaboration from the outset may lead to delays. Yet, embracing systemic approaches is a key element to working catalytically as it paves the way for the initiatives to play a role in addressing structural issues. While individual initiatives may prove to be successful in addressing issues in a limited way, a structural approach holds the possibility of larger societal gains down the road.

As the Yuvabadhana Foundation representative shared, "Collaboration with the government can be challenging due to cumbersome processes, bureaucracy, and the way the system is set up.

While it may be time consuming, navigating this challenge, and exploring methods for effective public-private partnerships can unlock a host of opportunities for systematic engagement and action.”

The Fukutake Foundation also believes that systemic collaboration is crucial to acting catalytically and emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining relationships with actors like governments and industry groups to bring about societal change: “While your work may be focused on a specific area, tying it to the larger social and economic development plans allows you to play a part in something bigger.”

Many foundations found it useful to combine systemic approaches with their work on the ground when seeking to act catalytically. The Lorinet Foundation’s Practice to Policy approach combines direct social investments with systemic interventions to amplify impact.

By fostering an informed approach rooted in continuous learning, by building local capacity, by engaging with other actors in the ecosystem, and by aligning with long-term goals, the foundation not only addresses immediate needs but also ensures sustainability. Such strategic frameworks help translate on-the-ground successes into scalable solutions and systemic changes.

Addressing the gaps causing structural challenges is another key to being catalytic in a systemic manner. When focusing on merely addressing symptoms, philanthropic actors may bring about short-term results but those often do not last if the symptoms are manifestations of deeper issues. Focusing on the underlying causes and the gaps in current approaches lays the foundation for long-term and widespread results. Acting in a way to get to the roots of these challenges involves coordination and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders to

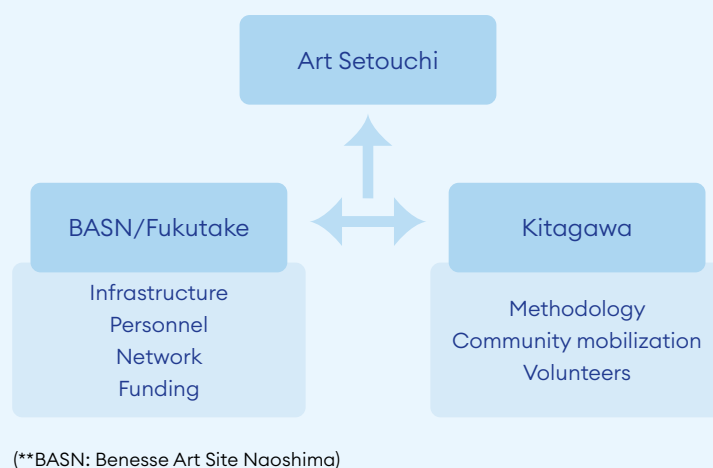


Figure 9: Fukutake Foundation worked systematically with the art festival and the artistic director Kitagawa in transforming the Setouchi area¹⁷

¹⁷ Ken Aoo, Sustainability 2021, 13(24), The Role of Civil Society Sector in the Development of Art-Driven Regional Social Innovation: The Case of Benesse Art Site Naoshima and Art Setouchi

share best practices and lessons learned as well as avoid duplicating each others' work. In the words of the Smart Axiata representative, "Organizations working on overlapping and complementary projects are often not talking to each other and not collaborating. These actors need to be brought together in trust-based partnerships and networks. Systemic collaboration and the use of stakeholder management tools can maximize impact by avoiding duplication and synergizing efforts."

The Pijar Foundation added that creating and tapping into synergies in the public sector's systemic network of programs can allow catalytic actors to support local actors to fill the gaps in those programs and contribute to the achievement of country-wide strategic goals. This links neatly with an observation from the Bayan Family of Foundations that larger institutional and impact investors are increasingly looking at supporting systemic initiatives rather than supporting individual projects and highlighted the role that philanthropic actors can play catalytically linking individual initiatives with systemic approaches.

B - Build Collaboration

The second dimension of effective catalytic philanthropy highlights the importance of catalytic initiatives building and embracing collaboration and collaborative approaches to maximize impact and generate a ripple effect. This extends beyond constructing providing financial support to grantees and local partners to include building relationships across sectors with a wide variety of actors from civil society, the private sector, to the government in order to capitalize on the unique assets and skill sets of each sector to achieve mutually beneficial social and economic goals.

When situating their philanthropic work in the larger context of societal priorities, there is an increased recognition of the interconnectedness of issues and that, even with significant resources, no organization can do everything on its own if it wants to have a long-term systemic impact. As the Yuvabadhana Foundation noted, this is about more than combining resources. It is also about combining skill sets and experiences to deliver better results for beneficiaries. By adopting **holistic, aligned and synergistic** approaches at the *design, delivery and drive to transform* stages of all initiatives bilateral, multilateral and network-based collaborations can truly be catalytic.

B-1 Holistic

Holistic

Look beyond funding by integrating technical support, capacity building, and networking assistance into partnerships.

Philanthropic actors should ensure that their *collaborations are designed* to be **holistic**. Whereas in the past, many philanthropic actors may have been more inclined to see their role as primarily a donor focusing on financial support, an increasing number of organizations are seeing the limitations of this approach and are now adopting a more holistic one that includes providing non-financial support to grantees as well.

The Pijar Foundation representative noted that money alone won't resolve challenges and issues in a long-term and sustainable way and that by providing context-aligned holistic support that goes beyond funding they can help to build capacity on the ground so that the issues can be addressed effectively in the future.

They have learned this from providing 10 small grants to organizations across Indonesia and finding that without comprehensive technical support, many of these ideas struggled to develop as intended. Going forward for them, funding needs to be backed by robust support that includes technical expertise, capacity development, and access to networks.

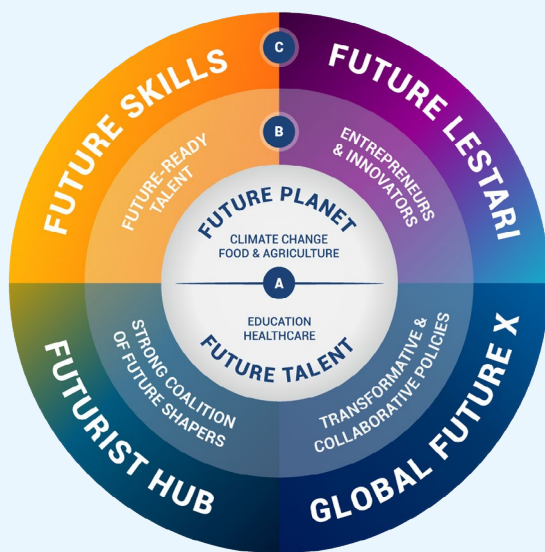


Figure 10: Pijar Foundation adopts a holistic approach that goes beyond funding through Future Skills, Global Future X, Future Lestari, and Futurist Hub¹⁸

The JANPIA representative noted that there are capacity and skill gaps for them when they work at various levels of the ecosystem and they have adjusted to this by integrating larger provisions for holistic support in their budgets.

Many organizations noted the capacity gaps of those partner organizations that they support, but as Dompot Dhuafa noted, while capacity gaps exist, local populations possess other relevant skills. By providing holistic support that includes skills building and capacity development in areas of need, foundations can play a catalytic role in unlocking the potential of these populations. Helping to build the skills and capacities of these partners can lead to long-term benefits as well that go beyond specific initiatives. The Bayan Family of Foundations observed that building organizational capacity of partner organizations allows them to move towards future self reliance and access other funding possibilities with strengthened management and communication skills.

This applies to the work that Yayasan Hasanah does in the social enterprise space as well. The foundation representative noted “Many early-stage social enterprises lack basic business skills. Supporting these organizations with a holistic approach including capacity building and technical support can help them grow their businesses more effectively.” By seconding their employees with professional skills as POs in addition to providing funding, the process also contributes to employee development, which could eventually lead to higher performance in their main business.

¹⁸ <https://www.pijarfoundation.org/>

This creates a positive, sustainable cycle, where both funds and people circulate, helping the grant recipient organizations grow while also benefiting PwC and potential donating companies it hopes to attract in the future.

B-2 Aligned

Aligned

Select partners carefully and ensure a shared vision, clarity of concepts, and coherence in implementation through constant communication.

Philanthropic actors seeking to be catalytic should make sure that *design and delivery is collaborative* by ensuring continuous **alignment** between themselves and their partners. In the words of the William & Lily Foundation representative, “Alignment is crucial starting from the ideas phase all the way to implementation. Don’t assume that there’s agreement on what you believe will happen. Initial innocuous misunderstandings can result in deviations down the road.” This element’s dimensions include the careful selection of partners with a shared vision and approach and constant communication to ensure clarity of concepts and coherence in implementation.

The first building block of ensuring alignment is selecting the right organizations to collaborate with. Achieving catalytic results is most effective when collaborating with mission-aligned organizations. Thus, identifying potential partners who are knowledgeable and skillful is key. Beyond their competencies and functional capacities though, there must also be a shared vision, shared objectives, and a shared understanding on the pathways to arrive at those objectives.

Establishing this alignment from the outset is critical. Yayasan Hasanah involves social enterprises in the design of the partnership agreements and collaborates with them on goal-setting at the start of the project. The Rumah Foundation builds on this by adding that understanding each stakeholder’s interests and acting in alignment with them around shared goals is important for leveraging diverse strengths and resources. This may be challenging as the government, local communities, and private sector can have different motivations, approaches, and communication methods, but the investment of effort in ensuring alignment will pay off in the medium to long term, even if there may be short term impediments and growing pains.

The alignment process does not end at the design phase and must continue throughout the implementation phase through effective communication around concepts, implementation approaches, and actions. It is important to follow the fundamentals of communication: communicate with different actors in ways that resonate with them using language, expressions, and terminology that they understand. In the words of the Bayan Family of Foundations representative “Clear, effective communication is essential to alignment among partners and stakeholders. Ensure that you are communicating with the right people and that you have shared understandings of concepts and ideas.” Yayasan Hasanah found that by engaging partners in the design process and goal setting, they laid the foundation and precedent for continuous engagement throughout their partnership to ensure alignment.

These same principles apply when building or working with coalitions and networks. The leading Malaysian network GDRN has noted that “coalition and network building requires trust, time and constant effort.” This same observation was shared by the Fukutake Foundation who shared that even though there

may be some roadblocks on the path to alignment in networks, it's important to make sure that all stakeholders are on the same page before continuing. This alignment process does not end when partners join a network or coalition as it is essential that all partners remain aligned on vision and values to focus on achieving the network's economic and social goals.

Communication is crucial to this entire alignment process. By exchanging insights on what works and

what doesn't—more openly, honestly, and frequently—foundations can begin to transcend the silos that have traditionally characterized the sector. An ongoing dialogue among foundations, local communities, and regional governments can set the stage for lasting, systemic change. Openly discussing both successes and challenges will not only improve individual initiatives but can also contribute to the collective knowledge and impact of the sector, enabling better-informed strategies and scaling catalytic efforts.



Figure 11: GDRN is spearheading corporate social responsibility efforts in Malaysia by mobilizing companies with a shared vision and maintaining constant communication¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://gdrnbantu.online/our-partners/>

B-3 Synergistic

Synergistic

Patently foster trust-based relationships and capitalize on philanthropy's convening power to build synergies across sectors.

In order for philanthropic initiatives to be catalytic they should *collaborate synergistically* with a wide variety of stakeholders during the *design, delivery and drive to transform* phases. The importance of building partnerships and networks cannot be overstated, and the importance of nurturing a sense of trust in partnerships and networks is even more important. No one organization can do everything it wants on its own. And successful philanthropic initiatives require the support and backing of a wide variety of stakeholders. This requires dedication, patience, time, and consensus building but the payoff of having a fully invested partner or community or government body involved in your initiative can yield exponential results down the line.

Philanthropic actors should also capitalize on their unique position in the market with access and connections to a wide variety of sectors. Working across sectors with the private sector, government, not for profits, international organizations in trusted relationships gives foundations a convening power to bring a variety of actors together for mutual action in pursuit of common goals. Often these actors do not have links to each other or use very different language from each other that may not be mutually intelligible and hinders cooperation. Philanthropists can play a catalytic bridge building role here.

It's very important to build trust-based, synergistic partnerships and networks to work together with

like-minded actors. These provide opportunities for exchange, collaboration and learning of skills and experiences. Trust is crucial to all of these partnerships as it is the foundational element which facilitates synergistic engagement. With trust in place, organizations can tap into each other's competencies and strengths to optimize their own work and synergistically deliver joint initiatives. In the words of the MFLF representative, "Build trust-based networks to have a stronger catalytic role, capitalizing on multi-stakeholder strengths. Stakeholder buy-in – including central government, local authorities, and grassroots communities - is essential to success.

The Fukutake Foundation cautions that building this trust takes time and patience, and is not something that can be rushed. "With every initiative, it is essential to engage in gradual, patient discussions with various stakeholders. Rushing the process or advancing with only one party can lead to failure. The more stakeholders who are involved, the more time and care are needed in navigating this process. Take the time to build a solid consensus with stakeholders as acting in a trust-based, synergistic way helps ease the path forward." A key way of earning, building and maintaining trust is through communication, engagement, information sharing. GDRN has seen the benefits of nurturing a transparent culture of information sharing, noting that as its members see the benefits accrued from the information shared for their own work, their level of trust in their partners and the network builds. This gives them the confidence to be more open and share their own work, laying the foundation for future collaborations.

As highlighted by the Pijar Foundation and echoed by many other foundations, bridge- and synergy-building between actors who would not otherwise connect can allow private foundations to play a critical catalytic role in the ecosystem to capitalize on existing resources and opportunities for innovation.



Figure 12: Yuvabadhana Foundation aims to provide every Thai child with the opportunity to access quality education, through its 9 Tools approach, with partners from various sectors²⁰

The Yuvabadhana Foundation added to this noting that with direct linkages to practitioners, social enterprises, other philanthropists, the government, and the private sector, philanthropic actors are uniquely positioned to convene and mobilize disparate actors in pursuit of common economic, social and developmental goals. This is clearly manifested in its 9 Tools approach that it rolls out with actors from different sectors across Thailand.

In some situations, synergies can happen through introductions of value-aligned partners. The Rumah Foundation noted that regional and global funders are increasingly looking to work with local organizations to seek local solutions for local contexts. Linkages between these organizations don't often exist and thus by facilitating introductions and building bridges between these actors a catalytic spark can be generated that can bear long-term fruit.

C - Cultivate Impact

The third dimension of effective catalytic philanthropy highlights the importance of maintaining a results-based impact focus in all initiatives permeating the entire initiative lifecycle from the design, to the delivery and the drive to transform phases. Retaining the focus on impact keeps the intended beneficiaries at the centre of decision making and investments of time, effort, and resources.

By adopting **informed, accountable, and sustainable** approaches from the outset, an initiative can retain its results-based focus and lay the foundation for the achievement of catalytic impact.

²⁰ <https://www.yuvabadhanafoundation.org/en/what-we-do-en/>

C-1 Informed

Informed

Ground all work in a carefully researched and constantly updated understanding of the context, local needs, and key stakeholders.

Philanthropic initiatives seeking to be catalytic should ensure that their *design sets them up to be impactful* by being **informed** about the context, local needs, systems, and key stakeholders. It is important to cultivate a culture of learning that permeates all that they do and creates a virtuous cycle of generating feedback, best practices, and lessons learned, then applying the learnings from them back into initiatives to generate even more feedback, best practices, and lessons learned. This element has three dimensions: adopting an informed approach from the outset rooted in the global literature and complemented by contextual data; ensuring your understanding of global trends and research as well as local context remains updated; and, applying an informed approach to situate your work within the larger context.

Creating a culture of learning is essential for any organization that wishes to be catalytic. In the words of the Rumah Foundation representative “Organizational learning is crucial. Informed philanthropic actors benefit from educating themselves on broader issues, gaining a more complete perspective on their work and how it fits into the wider context.” The MFLF team echoed this sentiment and underscored how important it was to create this culture of learning from the outset of any initiative. “Adopt an informed approach by investing time and resources in the planning and relationship forming stages of an initiative.

Identifying the correct core set of issues to prioritize and the key people to partner with in the target geographical areas from the outset pays off down the road.”

Rather than imposing a standardized top-down approach for the sake of efficiency, it is essential to learn about local realities when designing and implementing initiatives so that they suit the local context. The Rumah Foundation and William & Lily Foundation also both highlighted the importance of investing time and capital in organizational learning in this regard. Knowing when, where and how to work based on local realities is critical to success. Doing the research and understanding the local context also allows for the design of initiatives that address underlying social causes rather than just their surface level manifestations. This was specifically mentioned by MFLF when they were looking to support the transition of local farmers away from opium cultivation by providing other economic opportunities in the Doi Tung region of Thailand. The MFLF representative also noted that an informed approach allows better decisions on whom to work with in any given context.

It is also very important to develop an understanding of the bigger picture. In the words of the Bayan Family of Foundations, “Consider the larger social and economic impacts of the projects that you are going to fund - if your project’s success is going to lead to social unrest, tensions in communities and other challenges that outweigh the benefits, it is important to reconsider whether this is the right investment”.

Bayan has talked about weighing these considerations when deciding where and how to support initiatives around the Philippines. Having strong research and local knowledge has allowed them to make informed decisions on where, how and with whom to work with in challenging contexts.



Figure 13: The Philippine’s National Social Enterprise Development Roadmap developed by the Bayan Innovation Group²¹

It can be hard to carve out this time to research and plan when there is an impetus to act and the needs that appear pressing are readily visible. But if an organization is looking to make a commitment to a cause, a little research at the outset can save a lot of trouble down the road. This can simply mean uncovering factors that may doom an initiative to fail or enable it to succeed.

It is also important to note that the duty of philanthropic actors to become and remain informed does not end in the initial phases of commitment.

It must continue throughout the initiative so that the foundation can identify emerging trends that may affect the community as well as staying abreast of how well the initiative is functioning and responding to local needs. In the words of the MFLF representative “Stay informed to continue to innovate and respond to support community self-sufficiency in the face of emerging issues.”

This point is complemented by the Director of William & Lily Foundation when, based on her own organizational experience, she urged others to: “Take the time to assess what is going on, why things are happening, and how they can be fixed if they are not going well. While it can be hard to pause, investing in reflection and planning can lead to more catalytic results”. The Smart Axiata representative shared that their team tested an entrepreneurial program with high school students that did not meet its target goals. Lessons learned from the program’s weaknesses and shortcomings though have informed subsequent successful initiatives.

Both the PwC Foundation and Smart Axiata shared that adopting an informed approach has made their work easier and more catalytic. The PwC Foundation noted that it helps them determine the areas to address with its work. Smart Axiata shared that by adopting a culture of learning it now has a tested, but regularly updated, methodology in place that it employs to assess whether and how it will support an initiative. By looking at the urgency level, resource requirements, potential sustainability of the initiative, local needs, and the alignment with corporate priorities, Smart Axiata now makes informed decisions on whether and how to engage.

²¹ <https://www.bayannnovationgroup.org/se-roadmap>

C-2 Accountable

Accountable

Monitor diligently, measure with rigor, and share results widely while embracing technology and building the evidence base.

Philanthropic actors seeking to play a catalytic role should integrate **accountability** into their *design and delivery* of their initiatives to be *impactful*. Demonstrating transparent accountability is a building block for nurturing a sense of trust between an organization and its various stakeholders and also maintaining a results focus throughout an initiative's life-cycle. At the core of accountability is the robustness of a philanthropic actor's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and approaches. This ties to so many elements as it informs learning, fuels adaptability, assesses innovations, and provides the evidence for pursuing further opportunities. Almost every single philanthropic actor interviewed referenced the importance of accountability and impact.

As the Director of the William & Lily Foundation stated, "Rigor and accountability in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical to ensuring impact. Closely tracking the strengths and weaknesses of an initiative allows for pivots to optimize results." GDRN shared that having a robust M&E system is vital for demonstrating results and accountability to its membership and has kept the members' motivation to participate in the network high.

JANPIA has a very deep structural commitment to its evaluation processes to ensure its accountability to

the people of Japan and to facilitate necessary programmatic adaptations. In every funded initiative, JANPIA adds an additional 5% to the total grant amount as a budget for evaluation-related expenses. When looking at the impacts of accountability on all level, the Lorinet Foundation perhaps sums up the importance of accountability through robust M&E best: "Actors with comprehensive M&E systems who are connected to the realities on the ground have the opportunity to drive catalytic change by advancing knowledge, strengthening ecosystems, and leveraging resources."



Figure 14: Lorinet Foundation commissioned a white paper study on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Mongolia to identify gaps and opportunities²²

Essential to ensuring the maximum effectiveness of an organization's M&E process is the shift out of a proprietary mindset related to data, i.e. the sharing of information widely. On top of ensuring accountability to all stakeholders, it also allows other organizations

²² https://www.lorinetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL_ECEC_Paper_11222022.pdf

to learn from your best practices and shortcomings. Nurturing this culture of sharing is a boon to all parties involved as collective learning from a variety of initiatives permits the optimization of all partners in the ecosystem. JGF displayed this approach with its school meal and farmer entrepreneurship program models. After much trial-and-error in their own implementation, they shared what they learned widely with others and invited other actors to duplicate their models and build similar initiatives.

Another dimension to accountability is developing a two way accountable relationship with grantees. The importance of this from the perspective of the philanthropic actor to the grantee has been covered above but it is also vital to ensure the accountability of grantees to philanthropic organizations. This can be done in a variety of ways, but must be founded on trust and is essential to the funder maintaining its own sense of accountability to its other stakeholders. One example of nurturing accountability with grantees emerged from Yayasan Hasanah which links the release of funding tranches to the accomplishment of collectively predefined activities. While it doesn't charge interest on its loans, organizations that meet their targets have to pay back only 90% of the capital provided. Yayasan Hasanah has found that this highly incentivizes accountability and compliance.

It is important to remember that comprehensive M&E does not have to be labor-intensive and hamper operational efficiency. As MFLF shared, new and emerging technologies make planning, real-time participatory monitoring, and results tracking with rigor easier than ever. If foundations are serious about accountability and impact, they should make use of relevant technology as a way of strengthening their ground-based M&E practices.

When taken altogether, strong and robust accountability on the part of all stakeholders nurtured through rigorous M&E systems results in the building of the evidence base for catalytic philanthropy.

C-3 Sustainable

Sustainable

Commit to the long-term and adopt approaches that nurture increasing levels of local ownership and self-reliance from the start.

Philanthropic actors seeking to be catalytic should *design, deliver and drive to transform in an impactful* way through the adoption of **sustainable** practices. The long-term sustainability of supported initiatives must be factored into decisions and actions taken all the way from planning, to implementation, to impact. This must include making a long term commitment to the causes and partners and building in sustainability principles from the very beginning. As the Jollibee Group Foundation noted, "When partners invest in each other and grow together in the long-term, a ripple effect is sustainably generated transforming all involved in the partnership and catalysing work done at the systems level outside the partnership."

Making a long-term commitment helps local actors understand that you are working in the area, in the sector, and alongside them for an extended period of time. Multiple foundations noted that community buy-in is essential for the success of catalytic philanthropy. It also allows for a focus on impact rather than just short term activities or quick fix solutions.

As Lorinet Foundation noted, “Adopting a long-term strategic approach allows for vision beyond short-term challenges and obstacles.” This commitment to long-term interventions necessitates both financial and technical investments in the communities and partners that help address key needs and can help supportively professionalize local capacities to take ownership of projects. It can also lead to long term benefits from the philanthropic organization who commit to long-term time horizons when working with social enterprises.

Organizations like MFLF who have worked in targeted communities for decades have been able to realize outstanding results in economic and social indicators in partnership with local community members and organizations. By being intensively engaged and technically supportive at the start then gradually reducing their direct involvement, the focus of sustainability and local ownership remains paramount. This sentiment is also shared by the Pijar Foundation representative who described “Integrating sustainability principles into projects from the beginning is essential. While you may have to be extensively involved in the beginning, try to become progressively less hands-on as the project advances and local actors assume greater control and ownership.”

One theme that emerged from multiple foundations was the idea that selecting local champions with the potential and motivation to be long-term agents of change and supporting their growth and development could be another strong sustainability strategy. An additional advantage of making long term commitments to communities and actors, such as local champions or organizations, is that it allows work to concentrate at a deeper level to address the underlying causes of the social and economic issues without being worried by short-term changes. Recognizing the interconnectedness of the Doi Tung region’s challenges, MFLF addressed extreme poverty

and opium cultivation in the region by investing in social initiatives, long term economic opportunities and building local capacity.

This commitment to exploring solutions to root causes is shared by Smart Axiata whose representative explained, “Investing in long-term efforts addressing the root causes of social issues represents a potential growth opportunity to match needs and support.” Yayasan Hasanah noted that “unbankable” companies -companies that cannot access conventional sources of funds- that possess innovative ideas and potential commercial viability represent an immense opportunity for impact investors who are willing to make longer-term commitments as support in the nascent stages can lead to strong returns as the supported social enterprises progress from seeding, to scaling and to sustaining.



Figure 15: MFLF’s Doi Tung Development Project has evolved from survival, sufficiency, to sustainability thanks to the foundation’s commitment and investment of over 30 years²³

²³ <https://www.maefahluang.org/en/doitung-development-project/>

Catalytic Work by Foundations

1. Bayan Family of Foundations

Founders	Regina Paz Lopez, Eduardo Morato Jr. and Francisco Bernardo III
Founding Year	1997
Head Office	Manila, Philippines
Website	www.bayanfamilyoffoundations.org



Overview

The Bayan Family of Foundations has been working since 1997 to create end-to-end holistic solutions for social enterprises from inspiration to implementation. Emerging from the roots of the ABS-CBN Bayan Foundation that was one of the organizations that piloted microlending across the Philippines, it is made up of four distinct components: the Bayan Innovation Group (research and knowledge management); the

Bayan Academy (education and capacity building); Bayan EDGE (impact investing); and the Bayan SEARCH (community handholding). By supporting social enterprises at all stages of their operational life cycle, Bayan helps catalyze the work of these local actors and prepare them for investment from institutional, national, and international impact investors. By developing the Philippines' National Social Enterprise Development Roadmap, Bayan has set up a sector-led council composed of actors across



Photo by the Bayan Family of Foundations

the country that work alongside both private and public actors across the country to collectively nourish the environment for social enterprises to thrive.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- Regional and international investors typically seek proof of concept, along with evidence of **long-term commitment by local philanthropists** in the Philippines. Engaging local philanthropists to support social enterprises during the seeding stage is essential for building their capacity to scale and sustain.
- Many social enterprises do not know about the resources that exist, nor do they have the skills and capacities to access them. Many impact investors are looking for innovative practices but lack the networks to be able to reach those actors. Thus, intermediaries play important roles in **navigating, bridging, and coordinating**.
- **People development** in the sector is a big challenge and this is often magnified by the prevalence of people turnover. An organization can invest years in training employees for them to move on, bringing with them their upgraded skill set. Building in incentives for employees to remain long-term and feel ownership of the various initiatives can be really important to ensure continuity.

Catalytic Work in Action

With the support of the Bayan Family of Foundations, a **holistic** halal organic farming system has been set up in the southern Mindanao region of the Philippines. While the project is functioning well locally, expansion and upscaling are limited because local actors are unable to access traditional loans.

These traditional instruments charge interest and conflict with the local system of beliefs. Seeking a long-term and **sustainable** solution, Bayan is working in **alignment** with local actors to construct funding mechanisms that can work for Muslim farmers to facilitate the investment necessary for expansion. Currently, opportunities with the Islamic Development Bank and other actors are being pursued to mobilize support for the next five years of the project.

By approaching the initiative in a **systemic** way suited to local needs, a surmountable obstacle can be overcome, and the growth of this initiative can be catalyzed. Bayan is playing a **catalytic** role by concentrating its efforts on unlocking potential funds for scaling an initiative it has supported from idea to impact. By making the connections between lenders whose practices align with the belief systems of the local populations, the impact of BFFs efforts can lead to a truly **catalytic** impact in the region, affecting many more lives than the originally supported initiative.

Lessons Learned

- Integrate **sustainability** from the outset by encouraging social enterprises to create self-reliant pathways that do not depend on philanthropic funding in the long term.
- **Holistically** include capacity development initiatives for local actors. This is critical as the skills needed to access funds and to effectively communicate with investors can determine organizational development.
- Impact investors are now looking more at **systemic** initiatives rather than individual projects. Building links between individual projects to help them become ready for institutional investments is an important role for organizations like Bayan.

- Regularly reassess organizational initiatives to ensure that they **purposefully** align with long-term objectives, as gaps can easily form. Regularly verifying this helps prevent larger issues from arising between vision and implementation.
- Clear, effective communication is essential to **alignment** among partners and stakeholders. Ensure that you are communicating with the right people and that you have shared understandings of concepts and ideas.



Effective communication is essential, but there's no standardized approach that works with all stakeholders. You need to communicate with each stakeholder in an individualized way. That is how you build a shared understanding of goals and get everyone moving in the same direction to achieve catalytic results."

- Professor Carlo Segun – Vice President –
Bayan Family of Foundations



Photo by the Bayan Family of Foundations

2. Dompot Dhuafa

Founder	Parni Hadi
Founding Year	1993
Head Office	Jakarta, Indonesia
Website	www.dompetdhuafa.org



Overview

Dompot Dhuafa (DD) is a philanthropic and humanitarian institution whose work spans the entire Indonesian archipelago. Originally inspired by the philanthropic contributions of university students in Yogyakarta in the 1990s, the organization supports both

philanthropic projects and social business ventures in the domains of education, health, culture, social services and economic development. By pioneering a new approach to “philanthropreneurship” rooted in the Muslim charitable principles of zakat, infaq, sadaqah and waqf, the organization has been able to sustainably fund its activities, while adding a new



Photo by Dompot Dhuafa

dimension to Indonesian philanthropy in particular and Islamic financing in general. On top of supporting projects across 32 provinces that have reached over 25 million beneficiaries, DD prioritizes the development of national and international collaborative networks so that various actors can come together to achieve collective goals in catalytic ways.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- There is vast potential in **Islamic philanthropy funds** (zakat, waqf, sadaqah, etc.) in Indonesia and the rest of Islamic world. While there are different interpretations of what constitutes Islamic financing, understanding what works in different contexts can allow one to unlock the potential of these funds.
- While capacity gaps exist in rural areas, local populations possess other relevant skills. By providing holistic support that includes skills building and capacity development in areas of need, foundations can play a catalytic role in **unlocking the potential of rural populations**.
- Rural areas often have limited resources and limited economic opportunities so younger people are leaving these areas to move to urban centres. This **brain drain** can only be countered by creating rural economic opportunities.

Catalytic Work in Action

DD's integrated Kawasan Madaya program aims to provide **informed** support for self-empowerment in rural areas. Tapping into local resources and opportunities, Kawasan Madaya officially launched in 2023 after several years of experimentation and trials. In one community in Lembang, West Java, a DD assessment discovered that the region's soil and

climate could facilitate higher production yields for farmers if they updated their agricultural practices. By adopting a flexible and **adaptable** approach, including cultivating **synergistic** relationships, investing in infrastructure and capacity building, and supporting the creation of cooperatives and community enterprises, the foundation has been able to play a **catalytic** role increasing production and economic growth. Farmers used to only receive the minimum wage for their labor, but now with strong local ownership of production, farm yields have increased significantly as has the amount of land under cultivation. The local community is moving towards being self-sustainable after years of relying on others, and is now looking to support other communities in the future. Guided by its values and vision, DD has demonstrated the power of **purposeful catalytic** philanthropy by identifying and comprehensively addressing the key challenges and gaps that prevented the local community from activating their economic potential. By providing the tools and support to allow farmers to flourish in cultivating their own land, **catalytic** economic and social impacts far beyond the scope of the DD's intervention have been achieved.

Lessons Learned

- It's very important to build trust-based, **synergistic** partnerships and networks to work together with like-minded actors. DD is part of many forums, associations, and committees allowing it to tap into diverse experiences, skill sets and knowledge bases to strengthen its own work.
- Each community has its own local champions who have the motivation, potential and connections to be catalysts for change and development. Taking an **informed** approach by identifying, mobilizing and investing in these local champions can help

projects achieve much greater results.

- Organizations should always remain true to their values and vision. By keeping these at the core, organizations can ensure **purposeful** alignment between the work they are undertaking and their overall objectives.
- Providing flexible and **adaptable** support that covers its five core areas (education, health, economic development, social development and culture) allows DD to achieve more sustainable and lasting results. It also demonstrates local commitment to communities and helps bring community ownership to the projects.



No organization can do everything on its own. Invest in building and maintaining partnerships and networks. Moving forward together with other like-minded actors can bring greater results for all organizations and for the communities they are aiming to serve.”

- Haryo Mojopahit – Managing Director of Institute for Development and Islamic Studies (IDEAS) – Dompét Dhuafa



Photo by Dompét Dhuafa

3. Fukutake Foundation

Founder	Soichiro Fukutake
Founding Year	2004
Head Office	Naoshima, Kagawa Prefecture, Japan
Website	https://fukutake-foundation.jp

Overview

From the time the Fukutake Foundation's affiliated company started running children's camps in the 1980s, contributing to community development and growth has been essential to its work.

公益財団法人 福武財団 Fukutake Foundation

Now known as Benesse Holdings, the company's name literally comes from the Latin words 'well' and 'being'. Inspired by this, the foundation set its mission to "create a good community through art", and places community investment at the heart of its practices. The Fukutake Foundation has been promoting local



Photo by the Fukutake Foundation

revitalization through contemporary art on Naoshima, Teshima and Inujima islands through both museums and transformative art initiatives that engage the local community in public spaces since 2004. In a region facing many social and economic challenges, community building through art is part of a catalytic community revitalization partnership between local government, local industry and the foundation. In addition to the economic impacts generated, this initiative has beautified the region and fostered a greater sense of pride among local residents.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- While modern art has been supported through CSR and philanthropic initiatives in many parts of the world, deliberately juxtaposing modern art in a rural setting is considered to be pioneered by the Fukutake Foundation in Japan.
- With every initiative, it is essential to engage in **gradual, patient discussions** with various stakeholders. Rushing the process or advancing with only one party can lead to failure. The more stakeholders who are involved, the more time and care are needed in navigating this process.
- At a time when people are focused on immediate results, it is **also important to take the long-term view**. Demonstrating a long-term commitment allows you to focus on impact rather than just the accomplishment of short-term activities.

Catalytic Work in Action

Under the Benesse Art Site Naoshima project, the foundation runs a series of world class modern art museums and initiatives like Teshima Art Museum, the Chichu Art Museum and the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum, while also showcasing local art overseas

and hosting the Setouchi Triennale. These efforts combine with **systemic** collaborations with government and local industry to build local pride, boost tourism and stimulate broader economic development. By being **purposeful**, focusing on its core strengths and acting in **alignment** with local partners, **catalytic** results have been achieved.

Having established proof of concept and building on their successes, the Fukutake Foundation is playing a further **catalytic** role by providing financial support for similar modern art projects to be implemented by other organizations throughout Japan. This includes the Grants for Regional Revitalization through Art and Grants for Seto Inland Sea Region Development which are implemented by local organizations with the foundation's support through trust-based and **synergistic** partnerships. This **catalytic** support extends beyond purely financial investment and also provides technical assistance, capacity building and access to the foundation's extensive experience to ensure a ripple effect beyond the scope and timeframe of the specific projects.

Lessons Learned

- Collaborate with the local community in all initiatives. Even if a foundation is supporting a specific project, there will be ramifications for the larger community. Take the time to build a solid consensus with stakeholders as acting in a trust-based, **synergistic** way helps ease the path forward.
- Build strong relationships with local governments and local industry in order to achieve **systemic** catalytic results. While your work may be focused on a specific area, tying it to the larger social and economic development plans allows you to play a part in something bigger.

- Changing local circumstances, rotating actors and organizational evolutions can lead to a lack of clarity when developing new projects. By consistently ensuring **alignment** to the original vision and the community's needs, evolution and development can continue without the loss of direction and purpose.
- Determine what your foundation can and cannot do, what it is good at and what it is not good at. It is best to be **purposeful** by focusing on your own strengths and tapping into the strengths and capabilities of other stakeholders to fill gaps and areas of weakness.



Invest the time to build relationships with your partners and the local communities. The pace of this step cannot be hastened as it takes time to establish yourself in a community. Gaining trust is of utmost importance. Once established, even if minor issues arise, adjustments can be made based on that trust.”

- Ryoji Kasahara – Director-General –
Fukutake Foundation



Photo by the Fukutake Foundation

4. Government-Linked Companies Demi Rakyat & Negara

Co-Chairs	Yayasan Hasanah and Yayasan TM
Founding Year	2014
Head Office	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Website	https://gdrnbantu.online



Overview

Government-Linked Companies Demi Rakyat & Negara (GDRN) plays an important coordination role

in the Malaysian philanthropic landscape. It first started as the disaster response network and coordinating entity of Malaysia's government-linked investment companies (GLICs) and government-linked



Photo by Government-Linked Demi Rakyat & Negara

companies (GLCs). As the success of its coordination efforts became apparent, the GDRN's focus areas expanded in line with the government's aspirations for education, community development, and humanitarian efforts in 2022. All GDRN members have their own individual corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that primarily focus on education and community development. At the same time, GDRN's work fosters collaboration of its members to coordinate resources, minimize redundancy, and ensure maximum beneficiary reach and impact. As the co-chairs of the GDRN secretariat, Yayasan Hasanah (YH) and Yayasan TM (YTM) take the lead in facilitating GDRN members' collective efforts. Ultimately, the aim is to catalytically drive greater social impact by leveraging the power of the collective.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- A network made up of 23 of Malaysia's leading companies possesses enormous potential to transform the country through coordinated efforts but facilitating **effective communication and coordination** between all actors while ensuring alignment on vision requires significant efforts.
- While emergencies and disasters create a sense of urgency, the response time is much longer during periods of regular operation. **Keeping members engaged** while focused on longer term strategic developmental goals requires consistent efforts.
- To tackle challenges in achieving **long-term strategic development goals**, the GDRN Secretariat is enhancing relationships with key stakeholders, including the government and relevant organizations, by establishing opportunities and platforms for discussion and planning.

Catalytic Work in Action

In response to the flooding resulting from the 2023 monsoon season, GDRN's **purposeful**, coordinated humanitarian efforts resulted in assistance provided to more than 114,000 victims across the country. This comprehensive support included food packs, cash-aids, hygiene kits, return-to-home necessities, cleaning equipment, mental health/social support, infrastructure repair, telecommunications and health assistance that directly met the basic needs of those affected by the situation and indirectly supported the larger communities. By tapping into the strengths of each organization, committing to **accountability** and measuring its work with rigor the network was able to leverage the support from its members to achieve larger goals. Coordination efforts, including working with relevant government agencies like National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), Department of Social Welfare as well as non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, helped avoid duplication of efforts and enabled targeting of the communities most in need. As shown in its response to this monsoon-related flooding, GDRN's **catalytic** work focuses on coordinating the **aligned** efforts and resources of its trust-based network so that the **synergistic** response from its members is greater than the sum of its parts.

Lessons Learned

- Network members want to see the benefits of membership. This includes access to specialized events, learning opportunities, and networking. It also means that GDRN must have an effective and rigorous impact measurement and monitoring system to demonstrate results and **accountability** to its members, the government and people of Malaysia.

- GDRN's **synergistic** culture of information-sharing is welcomed by its members. Facilitating trust-based information sharing between companies used to protecting proprietary information isn't the easiest. As members see the benefits accrued from the information, best practices and lessons learned shared by others, they open up to share more too.
- Coalition building requires trust, time and constant effort. This does not end when members join as it is essential that all members remain **aligned** on vision and values to help the country achieve its economic and social goals.
- Each GDRN member has finite resources, and GDRN can't respond to all society's needs, at all times. GDRN's **purposeful** coordination efforts tap into its members strengths and expertise to target the highest priority sectors and the regions with the greatest needs.



The GDRN's collective efforts, leveraging varying resources and strengths through its network, aim to foster innovative solutions and drive impactful initiatives. As a network, relationship building and maintenance is critical so that the organization can ensure that the philanthropic work of all its members is effectively catalyzed in the country's best interests."

- Ainol Shahrarina Sahar – Director of Yayasan TM – GDRN Co-Chair



Photo by Government-Linked Demi Rakyat & Negara

5. Japan Network for Public Interest Activities (JANPIA)

Founder	The Japan Business Federation (Keidanren)
Founding Year	2018
Head Office	Tokyo, Japan
Website	https://www.janpia.or.jp



JANPIA

一般財団法人 日本民間公益活動連携機構



Overview

In December 2016, the Parliamentarians' League for Promoting the Utilization of Dormant Deposits and the Japanese government enacted a law promoting the

use of dormant deposits, for public interest activities to resolve social issues that are difficult for national and local governments to address after making every effort to repay to depositors. The idea was to redirect the contents of dormant bank deposits, ones that



Photo by JANPIA

have been left unused for over 10 years, back into society. Amounting to approximately USD 940 million (JPY 140 billion) yearly, Japan's dormant deposit use system consists of three-tiered organizations, the Designated Utilization Organization, the Fund Distribution Organizations, and the Implementing Organizations for public interest activities. JANPIA, or Japan Network for Public Interest Activities, was established as a general incorporated foundation by The Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) in July 2018 and was selected as this Designated Utilization Organization based on a public tender by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government in January 2019. For 2024, JANPIA's project scale includes over USD 60 million (JPY 9 billion) in grants and nearly USD 7 million (JPY 1 billion) in impact-first investments. Beyond addressing specific social issues, JANPIA is also actively fulfilling its role as an ecosystem builder, a key aspect of its basic policy as an organization.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- Given Japan's aging population and the government's limited financial resources, there is an increasing **need to find innovative ways** of providing needed social services.
- The existence of **dormant bank deposits** represents a significant opportunity. In Asia, only Japan and South Korea seem to be utilizing this significant pot of potential funding for the public good. Other countries could follow suit.
- Cases of **embezzlement or misappropriation** of grant funds have not been fully eradicated. Various mechanisms have been devised to prevent such incidents, with checks at each stage from application to implementation, and thorough information disclosure. Addressing this remains a future challenge.

Catalytic Work in Action

JANPIA views ecosystem development as an important part of its work. It has adopted a **holistic** and **adaptable** approach that combines technical and financial support, with a focus on creating grant frameworks for human resource development, mandating social impact self-assessments, and allocating budgets for monitoring, evaluation and learning. JANPIA focuses on eight main social issues that it has identified under three main headings specified by the relevant law: (1.) support for children and young people; (2.) support for people having difficulty in their daily lives; and, (3.) support for communities facing decline.

Some of its work has included: introducing virtual reality to close the "experience gap" for children of Okinawa Prefecture; undertaking projects to create a sustainable local community in a declining population area near Tokyo area; and, creating employment opportunities for physically challenged people in rural areas of Fukuoka Prefecture. By using a three-tiered system of a designated utilization organization, fund distribution organizations, and implementing organizations, and by having a robust system of monitoring and evaluation, JANPIA is building an ecosystem rooted in **accountability** to ensure the **sustainable** and **catalytic** effects of its work.

Lessons Learned

- There is a clear shortage of skilled personnel at many levels of the ecosystem. Addressing this challenge requires a more **holistic** approach providing technical support as well as building in the costs for securing talent in project budgets.
- Many local organizations struggle to move beyond a volunteer-based model. There is a prevalent belief in the value of working with "pure hearts".

Helping to professionalize these organizations through a **sustainable** approach is necessary to elevate their work though some are reluctant to change their traditional methods.

- Grants to implementing organizations come mainly in project grants (funds for specific projects). Mandated evaluations demonstrate social impact and keep the focus of the work on beneficiaries. The robust monitoring and evaluation systems in place allow for **adaptation** to emerging issues and **accountability** to the public over resources granted or invested. An additional 5% is added to the total grant amount as a budget for evaluation-related expenses.

“Where organizational capacity is lacking, leading to weak execution of project grants, implementation can be improved through ongoing accompanying and hands-on support. Building this capacity allows us to catalyze the work of partner organizations in all their efforts going forward.”

- Masaharu Ookawa – Secretary General – Japan Network for Public Interest Activities (JANPIA)



Photo by JANPIA

6. Jollibee Group Foundation

Founders	Grace and Tony Tan Caktiong
Founding Year	2005
Head Office	Pasig City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Website	https://foundation.jollibee-group.com



Overview

Jollibee Group Foundation (JGF) is the social development arm of Jollibee Group, one of the fastest growing Asian food chains in the world. In a country where food insecurity is prevalent, especially in rural areas, JGF is striving for a country

where every Filipino family has food on the table. By working to promote food access through programs in agriculture, education and disaster response, JGF builds partnerships and capacity for community resilience and self-reliance. The foundation is guided by a three-pronged approach to all of its work: thinking at a systems level, harnessing core strengths,



Photo by the Jollibee Group Foundation

and working collaboratively. With strong partnerships with a wide range of actors from the grassroots level to the national government, JGF supports four core programs: a farmer entrepreneurship program, an employment-based skills training and scholarship program, a school feeding program, and a food aid program to serve vulnerable communities especially during calamities.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- The civil society sector in the Philippines, including foundations and nonprofits, needs **human resources capacity** and leadership development for its next generation of leaders. Organizations like the Association of Foundations (AF) provide leadership training for the sector.
- Supporting institutions have the opportunity to create true and sustainable impact by developing programs that are purposeful and **needs based**. This can be done by creating a system wherein funders and beneficiary committees collaborate on how to address their needs while providing approaches that can be replicable and feasible.
- **Partnering with local institutions** is crucial. When partners invest in each other and grow together in the long-term, impacts are sustainably generated that transform all involved in the partnership and catalyze the work being done at the systemic level outside the partnership.

Catalytic Work in Action

The Farmer Entrepreneurship Program (FEP) is a core pillar of JGF's work and a key element of the Jollibee Group's supply chain. In a landscape where farmers' access to financing and markets is limited, the FEP works **purposefully** to transform smallholder farmers from producers to agro-entrepreneurs who are capable of collectively supplying corporate market

players like Jollibee Group. JGF and its partners organize, assist, and advise farmers in every step of their agro-entrepreneurship journey so that the farmers can have an increased and steady income. On top of training farmers to strengthen their agricultural practices and their position within agricultural value chains, JGF demonstrates its **adaptability** by also piloting contextual and need-based innovations like weather warning systems and a soil health management system. It also carefully monitors FEP and its innovations to ensure **accountability** to its stakeholders. In 2023, the Jollibee Group purchased over 1.4 million kilograms of vegetables equivalent to almost USD 2 million from 17 farmers groups participating in this program. JGF has taken a long-term and **sustainable** perspective beyond generating products to meet their own core business needs. This work has been **catalytic** as JGF has sought to build the agro-entrepreneurship skill sets of local farmers and cooperatives and to expand their long term business and economic opportunities, including with other formal buyers from multiple industries.

Lessons Learned

- Innovate, measure your work with rigor and then demonstrate **accountability** by sharing successes and lessons learned. When JGF developed its school meal and farmer entrepreneurship program model after much trial-and-error, they then shared what they learned with others and invited other actors to build similar initiatives without charging any fees.
- An organization must know what it is good at and concentrate its efforts in those areas. JGF is **purposeful** and focuses on the core strengths of their corporate domain by honing in on food security and finds key partners who can complement their work by undertaking initiatives in other areas.

- While being rooted in your vision and core strengths, there is still the need for flexibility and **adaptability**, as standardized approaches will not work in every context with all communities
- Identifying potential partners who are knowledgeable and skillful is key. Making the commitment to work alongside them is necessary. For innovative organizations and social enterprises, thinking long-term and **sustainably** with partnerships is critical, as is working with local partners who can effectively implement projects on the ground.

“Every community, every partner and every situation will be different. While there are broader approaches that may apply, there is no one size fits all solution that works in all places with all communities in all sectors. Plan well, but be flexible and adaptable by not underestimating the power of learning by doing, anchored on strong partnerships and mutual accountability with communities.”

- Gisela Tiongson – President – Jollibee Group FoundationTM – GDRN Co-Chair



Photo by the Jollibee Group Foundation

7. Lorinet Foundation

Founder	Bolor and Pierre Lorinet
Founding Year	2017
Head Office	Switzerland, Singapore, and Mongolia
Website	www.lorinetfoundation.org



Overview

The Lorinet Foundation is a family foundation committed to Asia's inclusive and sustainable growth. Primarily concentrating its efforts on Mongolia, the foundation is dedicated to enabling positive and

lasting impacts on the lives of the region's vulnerable children, youth, and families. Based in Switzerland and Singapore to connect with the global philanthropy ecosystem, the foundation supports social innovations in the areas of youth employment and early childhood care and education.



Photo by the Lorinet Foundation

Using both grants and impact investments, it generates direct impacts at the local level by providing financial and technical support to carefully selected organizations. The foundation also aims to have a catalytic, systems-level impact by leveraging its contributions to generate awareness, promote good practices, and collaborate with systemic actors. Moving forward, the foundation is aiming to build upon its granting and impact investment arms through the mobilization of capital and resources from other funders and collaboration on larger projects with a wide variety of partners.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- Lorinet Foundation's **Practice to Policy** approach combines direct social investments with systemic interventions to amplify impact. By fostering continuous learning, building local capacity, engaging with other actors in the ecosystem, and aligning with long-term goals, the foundation not only addresses immediate needs but also ensures sustainability. Such strategic frameworks help translate on-the-ground successes into scalable solutions and systemic changes.
- Actors with comprehensive **M&E systems** who are connected to the realities on the ground have the opportunity to drive catalytic change by advancing knowledge, strengthening ecosystems, and leveraging resources. Engaging with systems-level actors in this way can bring about impactful policy changes.
- Conventional funders can be risk averse, particularly when investing in developing countries. **Philanthropic actors** who assume the risk of early stage impact investments and grants must be prepared to face significant challenges as they provide holistic support to help social enterprises become investment-ready.

Catalytic Work in Action

Focused on early childhood development, the OneSky initiative in Vietnam engages families and caregivers in under-resourced communities to create nurturing environments for children to thrive. After the Lorinet Foundation's initial three year co-investment to support activities related to family and caregiver skills training, the initiative's successes were captured by a comprehensive evaluation conducted by Harvard University. OneSky's steady progress opened a unique opportunity with Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to co-design a government-led implementation of OneSky's training program. Recognizing the **catalytic** opportunity, the Lorinet Foundation invested an additional US\$75,000 to help OneSky design an updated program and lay the groundwork for scaling the model across all of Vietnam. The results generated significant traction with other donors and raised over US\$4.5 million in additional funding for the initiative. This scaling and institutionalization of this initiative is a big breakthrough and it is something the Lorinet Foundation is looking to replicate in Mongolia.

Lessons Learned

- Adopting a **long-term strategic approach** allows for vision beyond short-term challenges and obstacles. During COVID, projects ground to a halt, but maintaining a long-term perspective allowed Lorinet Foundation to support organizations through these challenges and, within 9-12 months, work started to get back on track.
- As funders and investors, conscious efforts must be made to connect with the **realities on the ground**. Setting up an effective two-way communication channel is crucial to respond to local needs and project feedback. It also helps to

keep both sides accountable and defuse tensions that may arise.

- **Flexible funding models** between donors and grantees help grantees become more resilient in the long term. Non-profits need more unrestricted giving for their day-to-day operational costs at the start and this should be considered in granting and investment decisions.
- **Strong monitoring and evaluation** can help unlock other funding sources for partners. Using the results of an evaluation of their OneSky program, they generated traction among other funders and raised millions in additional funding for the initiative.



True impact comes from partnerships built on trust and shared vision. It's not just about delivering results—it's about fostering innovation, learning together, and building resilience for the long term."

- Sumit Joshi – Global Director – Lorinet Foundation



Photo by the Lorinet Foundation

8. Mae Fah Luang Foundation

Founder	Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra
Founding Year	1972
Head Office	Bangkok, Thailand
Website	www.maefahluang.org



มูลนิธิแม่ฟ้าหลวง ในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์
Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage

Overview

The Mae Fah Luang Foundation (MFLF) began its work addressing the challenges caused by deforestation, opium poppy cultivation, and a lack of economic alternatives in economically disadvantaged parts of Northern Thailand. Through sustained livelihood

development and multi-stakeholder collaborative engagement over several decades, its work in the Doi Tung region has resulted in income levels increasing twentyfold, 90% of the region being reforested, and economic parity being achieved with the rest of Thailand. Building on this success, MFLF has expanded its efforts to include projects across Thailand as well



Photo by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation

as in Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. While still maintaining a foothold in the Doi Tung area, MFLF's work now also includes social enterprise support, biodiversity and nature-based solution efforts, and sustainability advisory and partnerships focused on last mile implementation solutions. The organization now sees itself as a convener, catalyst, and enabler in driving sustainable impact, with local people at the centre of the development process.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- In the past, Thai philanthropic efforts were focused on specific themes according to specific funders' interests. Now more corporate actors are **linking their CSR and philanthropic work** to their main business purpose and strengths. Social and financial results from their philanthropic work can complement their business responsibilities and their pursuit of more sustainable impact.
- **Stakeholder buy-in** – including central government, local authorities, and grassroots communities - is essential to success. In under-resourced communities, supporting quality of life improvements, starting with the very basic foundational issues like healthcare, can help to bring the community on side and serve as a building block of the relationship.

Catalytic Work in Action

MFLF is involved in collaborative, country-wide community-based forestation efforts with the government, private sector, and multiple partners. Within the country's one million hectares of community forests, MFLF has started partnering with 200 communities to support sustainable income generation for their 150,000 residents through forest protection. As part of the country's carbon credit

program, the Foundation has engaged the private sector in innovative financing with valuable co-benefits – income generation for communities, forest and biodiversity protection, as well as carbon offsets for the private sector. By building the capacity of local communities to align their forestry conservation efforts with the modern principles of carbon credits, local communities officially qualify as suppliers of carbon credits to industry and businesses. MFLF's goal is to develop approximately 200,000 hectares of community forest under the forestry carbon credit scheme by 2027. All financing for these efforts comes from the private sector, with over 60% of revenues going directly to the communities and 40% of revenues being used for program administration as well as rigor and **accountability** processes like auditing and technology-based monitoring. MFLF's work has been extremely **catalytic** as its **informed** approach has created an entirely new approach to carbon offsets contributing to the future of the country's forests and providing **sustainable** income for rural communities. It is also **catalytically** being replicated by other organizations in the country looking to play a **synergistic**, bridge building role between the private sector and rural communities.

Lessons Learned

- Pave the way towards long-term **sustainability** through close, hands-on support at the start, then gradually wind down direct involvement by building up capacity of local actors to take ownership. MFLF takes on a mentor or intermediary role in communities where it has a long-established presence, helping to prepare the community on emerging risks.
- Adopt an **informed** approach by investing time and resources in the planning and relationship forming stages of an initiative. Identifying the correct core set of issues to prioritize and the key

people to partner with in the target geographical areas from the outset pays off down the road. Stay informed to continue to innovate and respond to support community self-sufficiency in the face of emerging issues.

- Foundations playing a **synergistic**, bridge building role are well positioned to sit between and link the efforts of both government and the private sector, catalysing the work of both sides to achieve meaningful impacts for communities. In order to be successful, alignment and coherence are necessary.
- Emerging technologies make planning, real-time participatory monitoring, and results tracking with rigor easier than ever. If foundations are serious about **accountability** and impact, they should



Impact measurement by looking at what the people really get from the interventions is critical. If you are serious about transparency and impact in your work, embrace technology. While impact management may have been more challenging in the past, new technologies have changed the game on governance, transparency, and impact tracking.”

- Ramrada Ninnad – Head of Sustainability – Mae Fah Luang Foundation

make use of relevant technology as a way of strengthening their ground-based M&E practices.



Photo by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation

9. Pijar Foundation

Founder	Ferro Ferizka
Founding Year	2022
Head Office	Jakarta, Indonesia
Website	www.pijarfoundation.org



Overview

A unique youth-led and youth-run organization, the Pijar Foundation is dedicated to shaping the future of Indonesia and Asia in the areas of climate change, food, agriculture, education, and healthcare. The foundation does this through advancing talent,

innovative entrepreneurship, coalition building and public policy under its two flagship programs: Future Planet and Future Talent. Avowedly non-political and strictly independent, the foundation is building practical and action-oriented ecosystems to help Indonesia become one of the world's leading economies by 2045, while also working towards the



realization of the SDGs. Backed by a strong board of directors and ten founding family foundations, the Pijar Foundation has already supported over 30 projects and engaged over 63,000 people since 2022.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- **Accelerating innovation** can stimulate growth in the private and public sectors to allow Indonesia to realize both its yearly growth targets and its economic goals for 2045 - known as the Golden Indonesia 2045 Vision.
- Being **independent** and unaffiliated with any political parties or social movements, while having strategic backing from private and public sector decision-makers, can allow for greater credibility with all actors across the societal landscape.
- Creating sandboxing opportunities and tapping into synergies in the public sector's network of programs can allow catalytic actors to **support local actors** to fill the gaps in those programs and contribute to the achievement of country-wide strategic goals
- For new organizations, investing the time and resources in **building networks** that will allow them to harness the best practices and lessons learned from more established actors in similar sectors can optimize an organization's path forward.

Catalytic Work in Action

As part of its commitment to talent development, the Pijar Foundation has created a Future Skills program that is **synergistically** bridge building between employers and university students across Indonesia.

The 30 multinational companies involved, including companies like IBM and Microsoft, run courses instructing participants on some of the core competencies that these companies look for in their future employees.

These programs are 100% free, provide university credit, and are available in over 20 locations across the country. So far, over 60,000 students have gone through this program, serving the needs of both industry, which is able to recruit better trained employees, and the students, who are gaining the skills to seek employment in the corporate sector.

Connecting the companies and students under this program is a **catalytic** act with the potential for mutual long-term and **sustainable** benefits. By creating and implementing a **holistic** initiative that provides students and businesses with the platform to engage with one another, Pijar is playing a **catalytic** role in Indonesia's growth and development journey.

Lessons Learned

- Funding must be accompanied by a **holistic** support system including technical expertise, capacity development, and network access for local organizations to thrive. The Pijar Foundation recently provided 10 small grants to organizations across Indonesia, but without comprehensive technical support, many of these ideas struggled to develop as intended.
- Integrating long-term **sustainability** principles and establishing a replicable playbook for future scalability from the start is essential. While significant involvement may be needed initially to

ensure the playbook is understood, it's important to gradually step back as the project progresses, allowing local actors to take greater control and ownership to carry the project forward.

- Bridge building and tapping into **synergies** between start-ups and established businesses who would not otherwise connect can allow private foundations to play a critical catalytic role in the ecosystem to capitalize on existing resources and opportunities for innovation.



Money alone is not enough to bring success. More holistic and comprehensive support that builds capacities, networks and knowledge must be linked to financial investments to generate growth and development.”

- Cynthia Krisanti – Director of Innovation – Pijar Foundation



Photo by the Pijar Foundation

10. PwC Foundation

Founder	PwC Japan Group
Founding Year	2020
Head Office	Tokyo, Japan
Website	https://www.pwc.com/jp/en/about/member/pwc-foundation.html



Overview

Driven by PwC Foundation members' commitment to addressing social issues, the Foundation aims to bring about a world with a sustainable ecosystem by supporting organizations that share the same aspirations to impact society.

Although it is a new player in the Japanese philanthropic sector, it has made significant contributions in its focus areas. The Foundation seeks to leverage the skills and knowledge of program officers, seconded from other entities of the PwC Japan Group, to collaboratively solve problems with grantees using specialized technology and expertise.



Rather than a conventional grant-giving approach, the PwC Foundation selects organizations that are willing to work together on solving the issues the Foundation aims to address. They aim to identify leverage points and crucial factors for scaling and introduce technology to expand these efforts. Their innovative funding model has been carefully designed to minimize the administrative burden and maximize impact.

Opportunities and Challenges

- The desire of PwC's **employees to make social contributions** to the world with the company presents opportunities for the philanthropic sector to tap into brain power.
- To attract donations from for-profit companies, as they plan to do in the future to expand the Foundation's work, the PwC Foundation needs to be able to **demonstrate program impact**. In addition, it must provide tangible branding opportunities for donors that enhance those companies' images.
- As a new foundation that is growing and evolving, deciding **which programs to focus on and the approach to take** with each program takes time. It also involves considerable experimentation. As they move forward, they are hopeful that these processes will become more effective and efficient based on accumulated experience.



Photo by the PwC Foundation

Catalytic Work in Action

Since its founding four years ago, the Foundation has **purposefully** supported around 20 organizations with individual program implementation. This has included work on local healthcare, environment, human augmentation, food system and well-being **informed** by local needs and the competencies of grantees. PwC Foundation's members who are seconded from other entities of the PwC Japan Group dedicate their partial working hours as program officers (POs) for these initiatives, closely engaging with the daily operations and activities of the recipient organizations. Donations from the entities of the PwC Japan Group are received by the PwC Foundation, which then allocates them to grant programs. This allows the for-profit companies to clearly track how donations flow into specific programs through the Foundation, providing transparency and accountability to the companies. By **holistically** seconding their employees with professional skills as POs in addition to providing funding, the process also contributes to employee development, which could eventually lead to their higher performance in their main business. This creates a positive, **sustainable** cycle, where both funds and people circulate, helping the grant recipient organizations grow while also benefiting PwC and the potential donating companies it hopes to attract in the future.

Lessons Learned

- Core to the Foundation's success so far is its **purposeful** establishment of a Theory of Change from the outset, which begins with



We see ourselves as part of the larger world beyond our corporate work. By addressing social issues as a specialized foundation that shapes the future with technology, we strive to create a world where everyone can thrive and be respected."

- Akihito Hyuga – President – PwC Foundation

the accumulation of individual programs and explicitly aims to form an ecosystem in the long run. All programs and efforts align with this theory of change.

- Employing its current approach of dedicating staff time to the various philanthropic initiatives also contributes to the development of its core business employees.
- Rather than providing purely financial support, adopting a **holistic** approach that also leverages the skills of the Foundation's members to support grantees leads to positive results for both parties. The innovative practice can set an example for other corporate actors to replicate.
- Using an **informed** approach to determine the areas in grant programs to address has made it easier to implement their initiatives.
- In order to shape the world with a **sustainable** ecosystem for organizations, the Foundation hopes to inspire more partners that share the same aspirations through the sharing of its knowledge, achievements and the vision for the future of society and the world.

11. Rumah Foundation

Founder	Stanley Tan
Founding Year	1991
Head Office	Singapore
Website	www.rumahgroup.com

RUMAH

• FOUNDATION •

Overview

Rumah Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Rumah Group, a Singapore-based family office committed to sustainable investments, communities, and the environment. Motivated by personal experiences, the multi-generational family is passionate about

people and nature. In 1991, the family started its humanitarian portfolio dedicated to empowering marginalized communities by focusing on critical areas, such as refugee support, poverty alleviation and community development. Driven by the urgency for ocean protection, the next generation initiated an ocean portfolio in 2018 to address the ocean's



In addition to tagging and tracking thresher sharks, the team at Thresher Shark Indonesia advises fishers on bycatch release, influences local policy and conducts outreach and education; employing a holistic approach to conserving endangered thresher sharks in Indonesia

Photo by Air Dive Alor

key threats of climate change, overfishing and marine debris. After adopting a climate lens in 2022, the foundation's ocean-climate portfolio was realigned to address three areas – awareness and education, the protection and restoration of blue carbon sinks, and alternative seafood; with a focus on Southeast Asia. Key themes actively embraced by the foundation include locally-led, community-based solutions; innovative and blended finance models; and contributing to the 30 by 30 goal, specifically protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. Rumah Group deploys both philanthropic and investment capital to generate positive environmental and social impacts.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- The Southeast Asia region is **disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change**, with more than 400 million people living in coastal areas. Health, sanitation, and education have been key regional priorities, however, philanthropic actors are increasingly looking at ways to address the cross-cutting challenges of climate change.
- Singapore has a growing culture of philanthropy, and **new ecosystem partners** like the Asia Community Foundation are supporting philanthropists both in Singapore and the region to optimize their processes and giving.
- Regional and global funders are increasingly **working with local organizations to seek local solutions for local contexts**. Building bridges between these actors is increasingly important.

Catalytic Work in Action

Looking at vital pathways for countries to deliver on the 30 by 30 goal, Rumah Foundation is acting

purposefully by supporting the world's first impact bond for small-scale fisheries (SSF). The SSF Impact Bond, led by Rare, aims to create a model for financing community-led co-management of small-scale fisheries to meet the needs of people and nature. Bringing together and **aligning** non-governmental organizations, philanthropic funders, investors, local fishing communities and government actors, this partnership initiative is **informed** by and capitalizes on the unique knowledge, experiences and capacities of each stakeholder to achieve collective goals.

Through partnerships over a five-year period, philanthropic funders will provide program funding when predefined results have been independently verified and achieved. This unlocks upfront capital from investors that fund initial program activities and allows a return to be paid out to them. By investing and supporting the SSF Impact Bond at this early stage, Rumah Foundation is **catalytically** contributing its unique expertise to help unlock the potential of a far-reaching, collaborative effort. **Catalytically** supporting the execution of this initiative to validate the bond's blended finance model and impact is also a key step to pave the way for future scaling of the initiative.

Lessons Learned

- Achieving catalytic results is most effective when **purposefully** collaborating with mission-aligned organizations, as these partnerships can leverage everyone's strengths. Regular interactions foster the exchange of ideas, enhance coordination and nurture a shared sense of purpose. Sharing resources and information allows everyone to thrive collectively.
- Investing in organizational learning is crucial. **Informed** philanthropic actors benefit from

educating themselves on broader issues, gaining a more complete perspective on their work and how it fits into the wider context.

- Understanding each stakeholder's interests and acting in **alignment** with them around shared goals is important for leveraging diverse strengths and resources. This may be challenging as the government, local communities and private sector can have different motivations, approaches and communication methods.

While partnerships can be challenging, it's exciting to collaborate with like-minded organizations and individuals as they enable mutual learning and growth. These collaborations have allowed Rumah's journey to progress further than we imagined."

- Kathlyn Tan – Director – Rumah Foundation



Climate Foundation is helping to regenerate coastal ecosystems and supports sustainable livelihoods for community seaweed farmers and fishermen in the Philippines. They have developed a unique deep-cycling mechanism for rapid seaweed cultivation, which is then processed with a UNDP grant-winning biorefinery into a seaweed-based biostimulant for agricultural use.

Photo by the Rumah Foundation

12. Smart Axiata

Founding Year	2013
Head Office	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Website	www.smart.com.kh/sustainability



Overview

As the telecommunication provider to over 8 million Cambodians, Smart Axiata sees its role extending beyond providing reliable digital connections for its customers. Its network is also a conduit to facilitate e-commerce, strengthen community linkages, support market development, enable economic growth and strengthen technology-based solutions.

This alone is **catalytic**, but, through its CSR program, it strives to further empower Cambodians to discover positive and sustainable methods of supporting their families and communities. The four pillars of Smart's CSR work are: advancing a digital society, advancing a green society, advancing people and communities, and driving governance and risk. Initiatives under these pillars include free data for selected students to study on online-learning platforms, the Educational



Photo by Smart Axiata

Broadcasting Cambodia (EBC) network, the Basic Education Equivalency Program, the National Digital Literacy Program, online child protection measures and a 2050 net-zero company emissions target underline the company's commitment. Collaborating with key partners, including the government, not-for-profit actors and the private sector, the initiatives have had a meaningful, catalytic impact and providing substantial support to the neediest communities in Cambodia.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- There are a lot of philanthropic actors in Cambodia but, in many cases, long-term, consistent, ecosystem-thinking is not present. Investing in **long-term efforts** addressing the root causes of social issues represents a potential growth opportunity to match needs and support.
- With such a large not-for-profit sector in the country, some philanthropic actors see social impact work as the responsibility of these organizations and the government rather than a **corporate responsibility**.
- Engaging corporate actors, NGOs, and the government to **communicate and collaborate** on the achievement of shared development goals can strengthen the catalytic impact of existing efforts and maximize the value of resource allocations by capitalizing on the skillsets of each sector.

Catalytic Work in Action

The Basic Education Equivalency Program (BEEP) is a program that facilitates access to basic education and skills development by bridging skills gaps and empowering disadvantaged groups. Under BEEP, Smart Axiata **systemically** collaborates with partners like the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, UNESCO

and other private sector actors. With a network spanning 33 centres across 17 provinces, this initiative builds on the expertise of its partners to champion innovative mobile learning approaches. BEEP supports learners who have previously dropped out to achieve the equivalent of a Grade 9 level education, allowing them to access further technical training and employment opportunities. Smart's contributions to BEEP have been **catalytic** as, by providing the platform for online learning through their core business, they have helped unlock learning possibilities for Cambodians across the country. Without their **synergistic** partnership role, the program would not be able to reach into every corner of the country. The achievements of the program, captured by its rigorous M&E processes that ensure **accountability** to program stakeholders, also display the **catalytic** impact of the program. One rural village chief used his learnings from BEEP to improve the operational and administrative procedures of his village. While this has reduced his administrative burden, the effectiveness and efficiency of the changes have made daily life easier for the residents of his village. He has also set an example for other local leaders to follow.

Lessons Learned

- Organizations working on overlapping and complementary projects are often not talking to each other and not collaborating. These actors need to be brought together in trust-based partnerships and networks. **Systemic** collaboration and the use of stakeholder management tools can maximize impact by avoiding duplication and synergizing efforts.
- Philanthropic actors can play a **synergistic** convening, bridge building role between the government, not-for-profit and private sectors. Formal networks are needed as the collaborative ecosystem is often built on personal relationships

rather than sustainable, institutional ones.

- Rigor and **accountability** through strong M&E processes are essential to developing effective initiatives. Smart Axiata tested an entrepreneurial program with high school students that did not meet its target goals. Lessons learned from the program's weaknesses and shortcomings have informed subsequent successful initiatives.
- Based on its experiences, Smart Axiata now employs a tested methodology to assess whether and how it will support an initiative. By looking at the urgency level, resource requirements, potential sustainability of the initiative, local needs, and the alignment with corporate priorities, Smart can make an **informed** decision whether to engage.



Impact should be considered from a long-term perspective. Building relationships and trust takes time. When trust is built, the community will see your values."

- Chem Srey Oeun – Head of Corporate Affairs – Smart Axiata



Photo by Smart Axiata

13. William & Lily Foundation

Founder	Edwin and Joyce Soeryadjaya
Founding Year	2009
Head Office	Jakarta, Indonesia
Website	https://wlf.or.id



Overview

The William & Lily Foundation (WLF) is driven by its vision to promote equal opportunities for all Indonesians to flourish. Primarily focused on strengthening the country's educational sector, the foundation aims to improve access to high quality services in the three

core pillars of its work: early childhood development, literacy and numeracy in primary education, and local economic opportunities at the household level to improve access to education. Over its fifteen years of operation, the foundation has continued to evolve



Photo by the William & Lily Foundation

while primarily focusing its efforts on the eastern part of the archipelago. Committed to continuous learning, the foundation has taken a step back in recent years to re-shape its approach to grant-making based on a careful study of best practices and lessons learned. Having now refined its approach, the foundation is now ready to expand the scope of its work with a renewed commitment to engaging and supporting local actors with more than just funding.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- While many players focus on capacity gaps especially in under-resourced rural areas, valuable knowledge and skills exist in local communities. Moving to a funding model that is open and focused on **leveraging these local knowledge and skills**, while still providing support for areas for improvement, can lead to more sustainable results.
- While philanthropists may have specific implementation approaches in mind, maintaining the flexibility to **invest in people and organizations** rather than specific projects can be transformative. Projects can always be modified but the people and organizational cultures behind them are much harder to change.

Catalytic Work in Action

Through its Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (PAUD HI) the Indonesian government is prioritizing early childhood development across the country through initiatives on areas like nutrition, child welfare and education. The related services and programs are carried out by a number of different ministries, and coordination and implementation across these ministries is oftentimes challenging.

Through its grants program for early childhood development, WLF adopts a flexible and **adaptable** approach that aims to catalyze the work of other actors who work with local governments and ministries to integrate the different services which are critical for children in the first 1,000 days. Focusing on supporting the implementation of the PAUD HI model by taking an **informed** approach that addresses the gaps that prevent its effective rollout, the foundation has played a critical and catalytic role. By **accountably** demonstrating both the feasibility and impact of **aligning** and integrating these services for early childhood development for the communities in parts of southwest Sumba, an area that continues to have very high needs for development, WLF has **catalytically** activated a much larger systemic impact that extends far beyond the narrow scope of their direct interventions.

Lessons Learned

- Rigor and **accountability** in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical to ensuring impact. Closely tracking the strengths and weaknesses of an initiative allows for pivots to optimize results. Comprehensive M&E does not have to be labour-intensive and hamper operational activity to be effective.
- Organizational reflection and organizational planning are always worthwhile investments. If you find that something is not working, take the time to assess what is going on, why this is happening and how you can fix it. While it can be hard to pause, investing in reflection and planning can lead to more **informed** initiatives and more catalytic results.

- Having used a top-down approach to project implementation in the past, WLF have found that overly prescriptive approaches often fail to account for local sensitivities and specificities. Now the foundation is much more **adaptable** and open for its partners to drive project design within the framework of a larger pre-defined scope.
- **Alignment** is crucial starting from the ideas phase all the way to implementation. Don't assume that there's agreement on what you believe will happen. Initial innocuous misunderstandings can result in deviations down the road.



Always monitor, evaluate, and listen. Don't be afraid to take a step back in the short term to move forward in the long term if something isn't working. Learn and grow from your experiences to make each successive initiative better than the last."

- Michele Soeryadjaya – Director – William & Lily Foundation



14. Yayasan Hasanah

Founder	Khazanah Nasional Berhad
Founding Year	2015
Head Office	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Website	https://yayasanhasanah.org

YAYASAN HASANAH



A foundation of Khazanah Nasional

Overview

Yayasan Hasanah (YH) is an independent grant-making foundation and the philanthropic arm of Khazanah Nasional Berhad (“Khazanah”), the sovereign wealth fund of Malaysia. It supports social impact organizations and changemakers in various

sectors to complement Khazanah’s work in advancing Malaysia’s community, social, environmental, and economic well-being. YH works closely with a wide variety of partners to stimulate collaborative and collective action through both financial and technical support. Until recently, it focused on the distribution of project and operating grants in the areas of



Photo by Yayasan Hasanah

Education, Community Development, Environment, Arts, Heritage, Culture and Public Spaces, largely through non-profit civil society organizations. It has now also incorporated a social enterprise component that provides long-term grants, loans, and technical support to early-stage social enterprises, across the above mentioned focus areas, that are unable to access capital through other channels. Currently YH has 60 social enterprises in their portfolio, and is aiming to scale up to 120-150 organizations by the end of 2024.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- “Unbankable” companies that possess innovative ideas and potential commercial viability represent an **immense opportunity for impact investors** who are willing to make longer-term commitments.
- As an organization’s scope and scale of work expands, **technology and automation** can be embraced to maintain and improve quality and efficiency.
- **Social enterprises can’t completely replace non-profits** as non-profits do a lot of essential work that’s generally not commercially viable, but the two can work well together to catalyze the potential of the other.

Catalytic Work in Action

Yayasan Hasanah proudly and **purposefully** supports the work of Agridata, a social enterprise based in Sabah, Borneo. Agridata aims to be a one-stop digital agriculture solution for farmers by championing sustainable growth, innovation, and a sense of community to all their work. Their online platform provides financial accessibility, market accessibility,

and a simplified bookkeeping app. They also provide technical support to farmers to ensure that they are using the latest methods and generating the best outputs from their land. By investing in infrastructure, offering fair prices for goods, and finding ways for farmers to collaborate and share resources like water supplies and greenhouses, Agridata has won the trust of the local community while still being commercially viable. The initiative is currently at full capacity with more than 400 farmers on the waiting list to join. With the model now established, YH is **catalytically** supporting Agridata’s expansion in a manner that will broaden its impact. By collaborating with social enterprises like Agridata through partnerships grounded in trust and **accountability**, YH acts **catalytically** to **holistically** support innovations **aligned** with YH’s impact-oriented social objectives to achieve commercial viability and success.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Under its trust-based partnerships, YH involves social enterprises in the design of the partnership agreements, collaborates with them on goal-setting and engages in continuous dialogue with them to ensure **alignment** throughout the partnership.
- YH nurtures **accountability** by tying the release of funding tranches to the accomplishment of collectively predefined activities. While it doesn’t charge interest on its loans, organizations that meet their targets have to pay back only 90% of the capital provided.
- Providing financial capital is often not enough on its own. Many early-stage social enterprises lack basic business skills. Supporting these organizations with a **holistic** approach including capacity building and technical support can help them grow their businesses more effectively.

- To maintain the focus on impact, YH **purposefully** supports enterprises with explicit social development objectives. Having socially responsible operational methods is commendable but, for YH, this isn't the same as having clear social and/or environmental objectives that are clear, direct, and measurable.



We highlight the importance of intentionality and additionality when deciding who to fund. We are looking for the intention to create impact by companies that were set up to solve problems in a commercially viable way. The intended impact has to be clear, direct, and measurable and we will support them to achieve that impact.”

- Stanley Siva – Head of Social Enterprise – Yayasan Hasanah



15. Yuvabadhana Foundation

Founder	Vichien Phongsathorn
Founding Year	1992
Head Office	Bangkok, Thailand
Website	www.yuvabadhanafoundation.org



Overview

Driven by the passion of its founder for improving education in Thailand, the Yuvabadhana Foundation (YF) was initially founded in the early 1990s as a scholarship program for youth in disadvantaged parts of the country. To meet the increasing demand

for the scholarships, YF has embraced innovative methods to mobilize additional funding by- running its own social enterprise and seeking support from other corporate funders. As a result, YF provides 6000 scholarships today. As its experience in the education sector deepened, YF has committed to strengthening the education system as well.

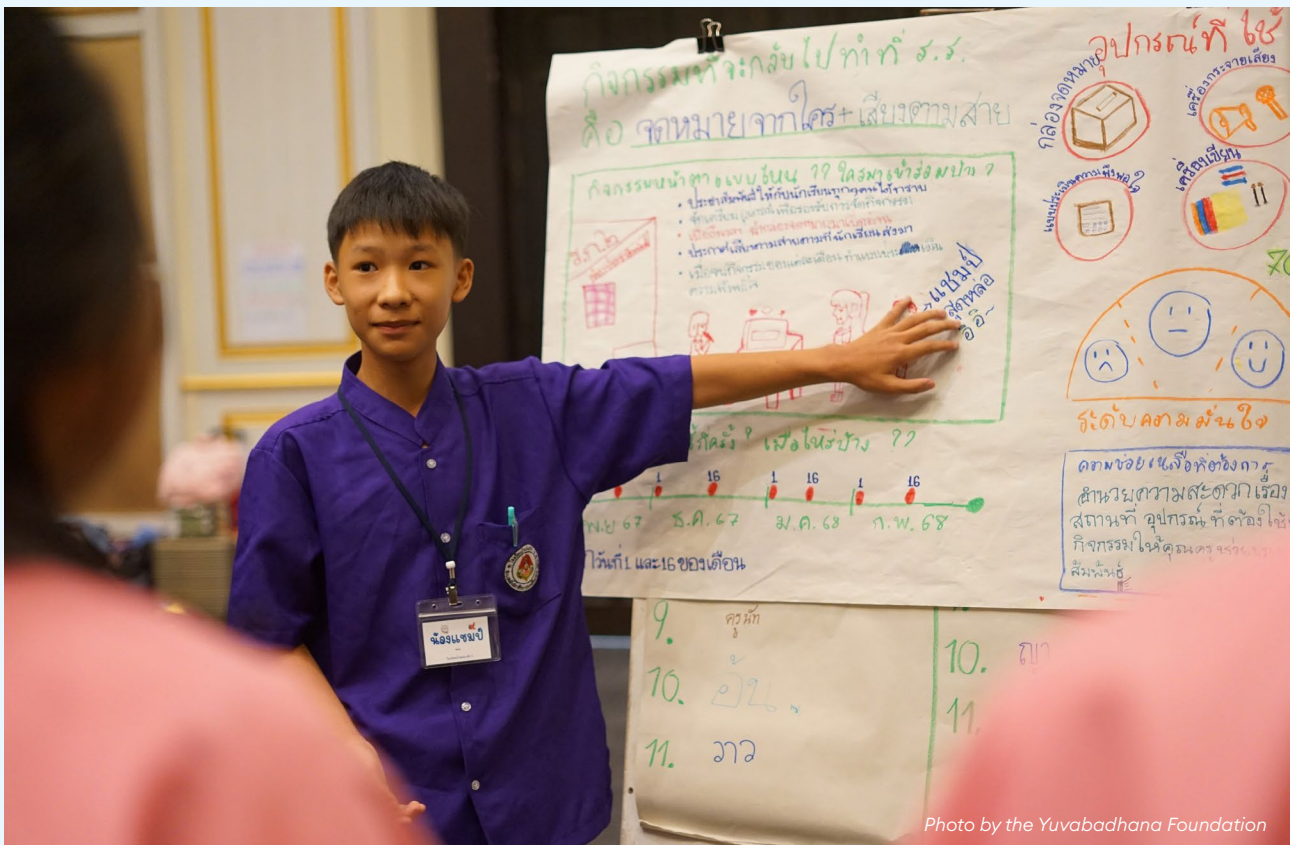


Photo by the Yuvabadhana Foundation

Together with its partners, YF now implements its “9 Tools” approach to provide holistic support to education across the country. Over time, this evolution has seen YF move from a direct practitioner to more of a collaborator and facilitator, serving as a bridge between various policy, funding and implementing actors to create integrated programs. This allows it to have a catalytic impact beyond what is possible acting alone.

Context - Opportunities and Challenges

- There’s been increasing interest in philanthropy in Thailand in recent years, especially among **younger corporate leaders** with a strong sense of social responsibility. Established philanthropic actors can play an important role in advising, collaborating with and supporting these efforts to achieve catalytic results.
- With the human and financial resources at the disposal of these companies, the **potential of their philanthropic efforts**, if properly channeled, can be huge.
- One has to be cautious about linking with or being involved with corporate efforts that are mainly **branding or marketing exercises**. Companies just looking for positive PR can be challenging to work with as their commitment is superficial and unreliable.

Catalytic Work in Action

YF’s signature 9 Tools approach encompasses education, comprehensive nutritional support, instilling beautiful moral values, fostering the discovery of their potential, and teaching essential life skills. Out of the “9 Tools” approach that it implements in 500 schools across the country, 4 tools are being led and run by its partners. These organizations have

specialized skill sets and by providing them with a larger platform, YF is playing a **catalytic** role. YF ensures **alignment** by regularly consulting with its partners to take stock, plan and strategize. This also gives YF a bird’s eye view of the entire ecosystem. By allowing its partners to focus on implementation, YF is able to channel more of its energy into **synergistic** bridge building with the public and private sectors to leverage support for **systemic** initiatives. This **holistically** extends beyond purely financial resources and includes **catalytic** technical, networking and mobilization support. Under its partnership with Teach for Thailand, for example, YF helped with the allocation of teachers to schools with staffing shortages in rural communities. As the government allocates education funding on a per-student basis, YF’s concentrates efforts on these rural communities where the needs are more acute due to fewer students and resources. By bridging gaps and **catalyzing** already allocated government resources, educational opportunities for their children can be facilitated where they wouldn’t otherwise due to a lack of teachers.

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration is essential as one organization cannot solve all issues on its own. This is about more than combining resources. It is also about **holistically** combining skill sets and experiences to deliver better results for beneficiaries. Collaboration is particularly important when looking to scale up and expand.
- Ensure **alignment** with potential partners, making sure that all partners have the same goals and objectives and share a clear vision for how to get there. This is essential for avoiding challenges in implementation.
- Collaboration with the government can be challenging due to cumbersome processes, bureaucracy and the way the system is set up.

While it may be time consuming, navigating this challenge and exploring methods for effective public-private partnerships can unlock a host of opportunities for **systematic** engagement and action.

- Foundations have an important role as a **synergistic** bridge builder between various actors and sectors. With direct linkages to practitioners, social enterprises, other philanthropists, the government and the private sector, philanthropic actors are uniquely positioned to convene and mobilize disparate actors in pursuit of common economic, social and developmental goals.



On top of our role as a direct practitioner, we serve as a bridge between social enterprises and potential sources of funding coming from the corporate and public sectors. This connecting role allows us to have an outsized catalytic impact beyond what would be possible if we were acting alone.”

- Kanokwan Chowsri – Director for Good Society – Yuvabadhana Foundation



Photo by the Yuvabadhana Foundation

Conclusions

The model of catalytic philanthropy outlined in this report offers a structured approach to unlock the transformative potential of philanthropy in Asia. Home to nearly half of humanity, the region faces persistent development challenges and emerging crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss. It urgently needs a form of philanthropy that is effective, strategic, and catalytic.

By grounding initiatives in purpose, adaptability, and systemic impact, while emphasizing holistic, aligned, and synergistic collaborations, this model sets the stage for more impactful philanthropic efforts throughout the design, delivery, and drive-to-transform phases.

Philanthropy in Asia is often tied to family and personal wealth and tends to be discreet, reflecting cultural values of humility and privacy. This discretion results in limited comprehensive studies and data on private foundations' activities. Unlike businesses, where market feedback drives accountability, philanthropy lacks such external mechanisms for competition and growth. Many foundations operate in isolation, merely funding organizations and monitoring through reports. As noted, "In philanthropy, excellence is self-imposed." While this autonomy has benefits, it can also diminish the scale and depth of impact. Without rigorous discipline, intentionality, and open feedback, philanthropy may struggle to achieve its catalytic goals.

To harness the potential of catalytic philanthropy in Asia, this report recommends that foundations embrace transparency and foster a culture of shared learning.



In philanthropy, excellence is self-imposed. In business, there are customers and markets providing feedback on performance and setting in motion processes of innovation and improvement. Philanthropy is voluntary. The "what" and the "how" of it are largely up to the discretion of the donor and the amount of giving alone does not determine the scale or depth of impact. Without intentionality and discipline, philanthropic aspirations for impact rarely fulfill their potential."

- Bridgespan Group²⁴

By exchanging insights about successes and challenges more openly and frequently, foundations can break down traditional silos. Ongoing dialogue among foundations, local communities, and regional governments can pave the way for lasting, systemic change. Discussing both triumphs and setbacks can enhance individual initiatives and contribute to the collective knowledge of the sector, enabling better-informed strategies and scaling efforts.

Additionally, this study highlights the critical need for further research in Asia. Despite the growing importance of philanthropy, comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data is still limited, and public awareness remains low. By promoting transparency, regional collaboration, and targeted research, Asia's philanthropic sector can fulfill its catalytic potential, unlocking greater impact and ushering in a new era of collaborative and transformative philanthropy.

²⁴ Bridgespan Group, High-Impact Philanthropy: Giving Better Across Asia and the World

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