



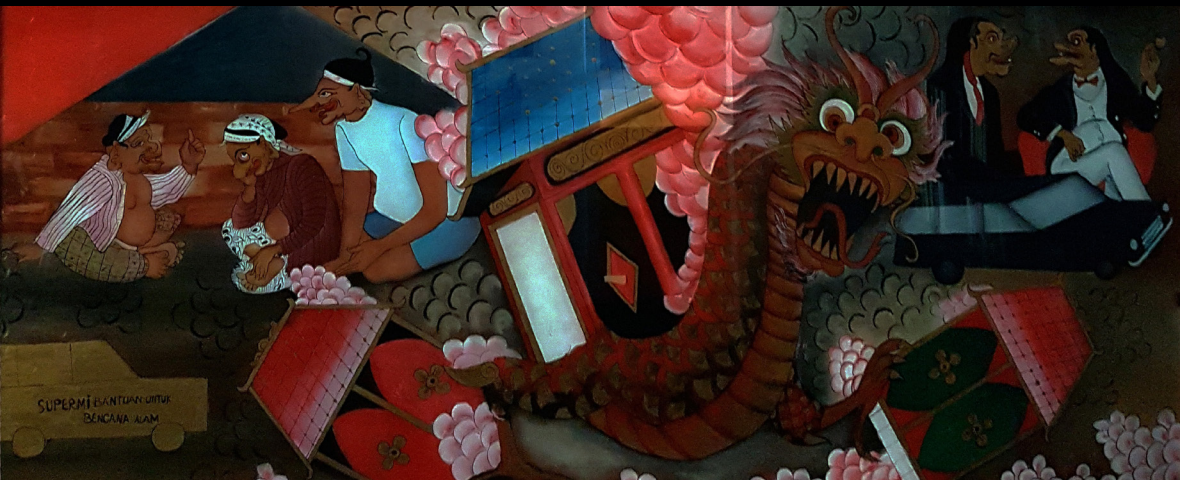
ASEAS

10(2) 2017



Österreichische Zeitschrift für Südostasienwissenschaften
Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies

FOCUS **PHILANTHROPY, GIVING, AND DEVELOPMENT**





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MEDIENINHABERIN & HERAUSGEBERIN / PUBLISHER

SEAS – Gesellschaft für Südostasienwissenschaften / Society for South-East Asian Studies
ZVR-Zahl 786121796, Kreitnergasse 44/31, 1160 Wien, Austria

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ISSN: 1999-2521 (Print), ISSN: 1999-253X (Online)

UNTERSTÜTZT VON / SUPPORTED BY





ASEAS

10(2) 2017



Österreichische Zeitschrift für Südostasienwissenschaften
Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies

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ASEAS

Österreichische Zeitschrift für Südostasienwissenschaften 10(2), 2017
Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies 10(2), 2017

FOCUS PHILANTHROPY, GIVING, AND DEVELOPMENT

ASEAS 10(2) focuses on the evolving state of philanthropy in Southeast Asia. Collectively, the contributions provide an overview of the trends and tensions in this sector, which is being shaped by often conflicting notions of charity, development, and business. Two of the articles refer to the decreasing presence and changing nature of funding from philanthropic foundations from the United States, such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Their tradition of context-specific strategic grant-making in the region is being challenged by the paradigmatic shift underway globally, which is being triggered by the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other 'technocratic' foundations. Articles focusing on the entire region as well as on specific countries (Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia) highlight home-grown philanthropy and how new forms of personal and institutionalized giving are emerging as a result of a growing middle-class and accumulated wealth. Pressure is also growing on local companies and corporate actors to show a socially conscious image by funding projects and contributing to sustainable development. Professionalization of faith-based giving is further leading to new philanthropic models such as the rise of Islamic grant-making foundations in Indonesia and other countries with Muslim communities as described by two of the articles. A question running through the issue is the extent to which this growth and diversification of philanthropy is conducive to equitable and inclusive development and democratization of society.

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TITELFOTO / COVER PHOTO
Glass Painting "Earthquake in Yogyakarta" by Sulasno, collection O'ong Maryono & Rosalia Sciortino,
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Philanthropy, Giving, and Development in Southeast Asia

Rosalia Sciortino

► Sciortino, R. (2017). Philanthropy, giving, and development in Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 129-138.

PHILANTHROPY – AN ELUSIVE AND CHANGING CONCEPT

This special issue on the evolving state of philanthropy in Southeast Asia provides an overview of the trends and tensions in this sector, which is being shaped by often conflicting notions of charity, development, and business.

Philanthropy is viewed as an age-old practice, yet not many are familiar with the term (Payton & Moody, 2008) and even fewer know its etymological origin from ancient Greek, literally meaning ‘love to humankind’. Classic definitions describe philanthropy as a private initiative for the public good (as cited by Gardner in McCully, 2008) or a voluntary action for the public good (Payton, 1988) aiming at improvement in the quality of human life (Bremner, 1988). These definitions, however, are quite broad and leave open to interpretation what philanthropy actually implies in specific contexts and settings. In trying to operationalize the concept, practitioners tend to take a narrower view of philanthropy centered on its financial dimension as implying a donation or investment of private capital for the public good. They further distinguish its purpose from that of ‘charity’ in that philanthropy is meant to focus on the prevention and elimination of the roots causes of social problems rather than merely alleviating the suffering caused by those same social problems. While charity is seen as directed at meeting immediate needs, philanthropy is expected to be ‘problem-solving’ and persistent in addressing society’s challenges. Its efforts do not provide immediate reprieve, but aim to enable disadvantaged people to gain the skills to improve their conditions while also creating opportunities for them to advance in society. In the words of Steve Gunderson, former President and CEO of the Council of Foundations: “Charity tends to be a short-term, emotional, immediate response, focused primarily on rescue and relief, whereas philanthropy is much more long-term, more strategic, focused on rebuilding” (The Melvin and Bren Simon Foundation, 2015).

This juxtaposition is inspired by the early Anglo-American philanthropists in the 20th century, foremost Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) and John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), and in successive years, Henry Ford (1863-1947). The private foundations they, and successive generations of US philanthropists, established with substantial endowments and generous tax deductions for their donations, aim to address the root causes of social ills (Bremner, 1988; McCully, 2008; Zunz, 2010). As Rockefeller himself stated: “The best philanthropy is constantly in search of the finalities – a search for a cause, an attempt to cure evils at their

source” (Rockefeller, 1984; Seim, 2016 p. 54). US foundations working internationally, such as Ford, Charles Stewart Mott, Rockefeller, and W.K. Kellogg, have traditionally also confided in the “power and potential of philanthropy to address problems as well as to strengthen civil society and democracy” worldwide (Ambrose, 2005, p. 2).

In this philanthropic model, the allocation of endowed resources is institutionalized and professionalized, with foundation officers strategically granting to selected organizations whose concerted funded actions are meant to address a specific issue and bring about societal change in a context-specific and synergic manner. Going beyond spontaneous individual giving from one to another person or to a particular cause – which still constitutes the majority of giving in the US and elsewhere in the world – philanthropic resources are channeled through institutions to other institutions, mostly non-government and civil society groups. Here, a distinction is made between private and public foundations, the first being established with donations of philanthropist individuals or families, and the second being funded from various sources, including private donations and public funding. On the ground, this translates into a multitude of foundations of various sizes and modalities. The Foundation Center estimated that in the US alone in 2012 there were 86,192 foundations with USD 715 billion in assets and USD 52 billion in giving. The largest of these and the highest number (78,582) were independent foundations established by individual donors or families. The remaining could be classified as corporate, operational, and community foundations (Foundation Center, 2014, p. 3; see Table 1). If other kinds of organizations with an official non-profit status are included, the number reaches 1.4 million in the same year (Statista, 2017). Outside of the US, reliable numbers are lacking, also because legal systems and public opinion do not always distinguish the scope of foundation work from that of the larger nonprofit or civil society sector and different tax systems do not incentivize and thus also do not monitor philanthropic foundations. However, it is generally assumed that the third or non-profit sector is large and growing and home-grown philanthropy is expanding (Ambrose, 2005, p. 3; “Homegrown Philanthropy”, 2014).

Independent	Established by individual donors or donor families as separate legal entities are mainly engaged in grant-making activities
Operating	Primarily run their own programs, but some also make grants. Generally established by individual donors or donor families
Corporate	Established by businesses ranging from major corporations to family owned shops, as separate or semi-independent entities
Community	Raise funds from the public. Engage in grant-making primarily within a defined geographic area

Table 1. A typology of (philanthropic) foundations (Adapted from Foundation Center, 2014, p. 3; Martens & Seitz, 2015, p. 9)

Interestingly, the modality of foundations as non-profit is today being challenged by new conceptualizations of philanthropy that do no longer see this as one of the defining criteria. The rise in the last two decades of a more universalist, technocratic, and market-oriented approach in philanthropy – triggered by the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) – has emphasized the view that the commercial sector can serve as a model for the third sector in devising ‘global’ solution to development problems and that positive social and environmental outcomes as well as monetary gains can be pursued simultaneously. In the so-called venture philanthropy, branded by critics as ‘philanthrocapitalism’, donations or loans are given to organizations applying a commercial model like social enterprises and so-called social impact investments are made to seek social benefits as well as financial returns (Heude, 2010; Sciortino, this issue). While increasingly hailed by its proponents as the philanthropic model of the future, in contrast to the ‘traditional’, purely non-profit model of early foundations, this mixing of business and social purposes leaves open the question in how far ‘private gain’ can be considered ‘a public good’ for society and its most vulnerable groups (Kvangraven, 2016). More pragmatically it can be questioned in how far tax incentives that have been granted by states, particularly the US and North European countries, to incentivize charitable and philanthropic donations and to promote the establishment of non-profit foundations and organizations as recipients, should still apply. This at a time when as the Economist states “The idea that the state should subsidise giving to good causes is resilient, but not easily justified” (“Sweetened charity”, 2012).

The growing diversity of paradigmatic positions with its inherent tensions adds to the complexity of finding common ground among “private initiatives for the public good as diversely practiced around the globe” (Harvey, 2011). Societies show a wide range of “types and modes of philanthropy, of scope and funding purposes” often in contexts with poor differentiation of charity vis-à-vis philanthropy and the overall non-profit sector and with limited infrastructure and tax incentives, wherein “organized’ foundations are just one means for giving” (Ambrose, 2005, p. 1; Sciortino, this issue). To take this variety into account implies again an expansion of the conceptual boundaries to allow for an all-encompassing definition of ‘global philanthropy’ that:

incorporates both giving and doing and includes both the traditional and non-traditional, the formal and informal, the religious and the secular. [This definition] recognizes that, across the planet, diverse kinds of philanthropic practice emerge out of a particular set of factors: cultural, social, religious, economic, political, legal and more. All are valuable, and all are ‘philanthropy’. (Harvey, 2011)

Beside referring to the fast expansion of home-grown ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ philanthropic practices worldwide in its various forms, global philanthropy is also commonly understood, especially among US-based organizations, to indicate that funds are directed at addressing causes across national borders either to international organizations operating overseas or to local organizations in foreign countries (Harvey, 2011). The increased use in the last decade of this term in its multiple interpretations is a reflection of an increasing recognition of the role of foundations, both international and ‘indigenous’ in international development.

A GLOBAL DISCOURSE ON PHILANTHROPY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a global discourse on the growing influence of philanthropic actors in international cooperation (Grady, 2014; OECD, 2017). Donor nations confronted with financial crises and taxpayers who have a diminished appetite for shouldering the costs of overseas aid, have started to take a closer look at the rapid increase of private flows from aid-donor countries to developing countries, in order of volume investments, remittances and philanthropy, and their actual and potential contribution to development. These private flows were estimated to account in 2014 for 85% of the overall economic interaction with “government aid represent[ing] only 15 percent of the total engagement, the reverse of some 40 years ago” (Hudson Institute, 2016). Convinced that “remittances and philanthropy continue to thrive and are important lifelines to the world’s poorest people” (Hudson Institute 2016, 2017), donor countries have welcomed private foundations as partners in international development efforts (Center for Global Prosperity & Hudson Institute, 2013; Grady, 2014; Hénon, 2014; OECD, 2014, 2017). Their governments have stressed the value of public-private partnerships, and argued that philanthropic foundations have comparative advantages of operational flexibility, consistency, innovation, and capacity to leverage funding. We are also reminded that that philanthropy should not be seen merely as “a ‘gap filler’ for ODA”, but should be appreciated for its concern for “under-funded sectors like social inclusion, human rights, and gender equality”, its building of new fields and networks, and for its added value to the non-profit sector “through the creation of grant-making portfolios that help build communities of practice, disciplinary fields, and social movements for positive change” (Grady, 2014, p. 5).

Among these rising expectations, philanthropic actors have been enlisted to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the 2015 UN Summit and to help realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all” (United Nations [UN], 2015). OECD analysis based on current sectoral funding trends of North-South flows expects philanthropic resources to significantly contribute in helping developing countries achieve SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions (OECD, 2017).

The turn to private foundations and global philanthropy in international development has been prompted by the international work of foundations from OECD countries, especially from the U.S. The lion’s share of attention goes to the BMGF, whose endowment of USD 40.3 billion (BMGF, 2017) overshadows those of such older foundations with overseas interests as the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, which have endowments of USD 12 billion (Ford Foundation, 2017) and assets just above USD 4 billion (Rockefeller Foundation, 2017) respectively. According to OECD (2017), in the period 2013-2015, BMGF contributed 60% of the total USD 19.5 billion in philanthropic giving from OECD countries to developing countries with over 11 billion in grants mostly in the health, population, and agriculture sectors, followed by the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, CIFF (4%), the Dutch Postcode Lottery (3%), the Ford Foundation (3%), and the IKEA Foundation (2%). American foundations were the large majority, with only 19% of the total originating from Europe and the remaining from India, Japan, Brazil, and Mexico.

The available data, skewed toward Western countries, underrepresent foundations in other parts of the world and fail to include philanthropic initiatives in lesser affluent locations. Yet the global discourse on philanthropy and development counts on the growing pool of local philanthropists in emerging economies to supply “a potentially better attuned and more sustainable income source for local humanitarian and development needs” (“Homegrown Philanthropy”, 2014). The expansion of home-grown philanthropy due to the greater economic concentration and polarization of wealth globally, changing fiscal spaces, and more integrated global systems is seen as a bonus at a time when the role of governments is changing and many are implementing austerity measures and downsizing the provision of social services. There is hope that these local sources will supplement or compensate for diminishing overseas aid assistance, while also providing more context-sensitive support. Global interest mainly focuses on China, India, and other countries at a similar stage of newly advanced economic development, but more and more there is also attention for poorer countries with well-off elites, especially in Africa.

This growing role of philanthropy in development, while hailed by governments and multi-lateral institutions and corporations, is not without critics. Most recently, the president of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Barbara Unmüßig (2017), asked: “[the] narrative of the well-meaning philanthropist taking on the world’s troubles may seem attractive, but should we accept it unquestioned?” She set alarm bells ringing about the global development agenda being decided by private donors who promote a “market-based approach, relying primarily on technical solutions to complex problems” that benefit the corporate sector, and make top-down decisions without engagement of civil society and local people and experts. She argues that governments should do more for public good and generate the revenues they need through taxation to fulfil their responsibilities, including to “provide multi-lateral organizations with enough resources to fulfil their missions” in order not to become dependent on private, unaccountable, funding (Unmüßig, 2017; see also Martens & Seitz, 2015).

Worries also extend to home-grown philanthropy, as local donors show a tendency to write off a social change approach and, so far, seem inclined to avoid human rights and social justice and stay away from advocacy work and civil society (Ambrose, 2005; “Homegrown Philanthropy”, 2014). As this issue will show, such observations are also of relevance to Southeast Asia.

FOCUS ON AN OVERLOOKED REGION

This special issue of the *Austrian Journal for South-East Asian Studies (ASEAS)* highlights the unprecedented growth of institutionalized giving in Southeast Asia, a region rarely included in the global discussion of philanthropy, from both an academic and a practitioner’s perspective. In the opening overview article, I reflect on the evolving state of philanthropy in Southeast Asia driven by global and local factors and by often conflicting notions of charity, development, and business and ask “on whether institutionalized private giving combined or in substitution of public funding can help address developmental gaps or, at the very least, protect the most vulnerable groups”. (Sciortino, this issue, p. 139). Philanthropic trends and their implications are examined, including the decrease of presence and changing funding practices of international

foundations, the family-centered ‘indigenization’ of philanthropy, the advent of a business-oriented model of philanthropy, and the consolidation of faith-related giving. This analysis points to the need for a more emancipatory brand of Southeast Asian philanthropy if indeed it is to contribute to more inclusive and equitable development.

The other articles deepen the key issues signaled in the overview by providing cases of specific foundations and countries. More particularly, Mary S. Zurbuchen in her article on legacies of cultural philanthropy focuses on the Ford Foundation, one of the major international actor in the region because of its long-lasting field presence, volume of direct funding to local organizations, and support of home-grown philanthropy. In her paper, she briefly sketches the history of the Ford Foundation work in the arts and humanities in Asia and its sustained support for building capacity and knowledge. She shows the changes the program has undergone over time and how its most recent rendition may compromise the ‘unique leverage’ of a grant-making tradition that is implemented by staff and offices embedded in country contexts and enlightened by grounded insights.

The focus then shifts to country-specific contexts. Natalie Phaholyothin discusses the evolution of charitable giving in Thailand and how the increase in local giving does not necessarily imply a full transformation to full-fledged philanthropy. The philanthropic sector could, in her view, be best defined as “a home-grown repertoire of socially conscious forms of giving” (Phaholyothin, this issue, p. 185). Next, the early development of philanthropy, particularly corporate giving in Myanmar as a country with an entrenched culture of giving is explored by Cavelle Dove. She raises questions about such ‘generous’ practices and wonders whether they should be examined in the context of the failure of the state to pursue development objectives and provide social services to the population. Finally, two articles focus on Indonesia and the rise of Islamic philanthropy. Amelia Fauzia in her article positions Islamic philanthropy as part of broader social trends in Indonesian society, particularly modernization and Islamization, and reflects on whether faith-based philanthropy can play a role in supporting civil society and promoting social justice and a pluralist society. Hilman Latief reflects on similar issues from a somewhat different angle, by examining the operation of the main Islamic philanthropic foundation, Dompot Dhuafa and its overseas efforts in Hong Kong. Adding a theological dimension, the article shows how religious concepts are reinterpreted to meet development purposes and better serve underprivileged groups, in this case Indonesian migrant women workers residing in Hong Kong.

In closing, an interview is presented that gives a flavor of the new international philanthropic actors in Southeast Asia. Mary Joy Pigozzi, Executive Director of Educate a Child, an initiative of the Education Above All Foundation of Qatar speaks about the foundation’s efforts to reach out-of-school children of Southeast Asia. The issue also profiles SEA Junction, a knowledge center and public venue on Southeast Asia that has recently opened in Bangkok, Thailand and is founded collectively by so-called ‘founding partners’ who share the same vision and interest.

This initial work on philanthropy in Southeast Asia hopes to inspire more in-depth follow-up studies. Academic analysis and public scrutiny becomes more urgent now that philanthropic practices are expanding and gaining more relevance for development and growth. For future initiatives, other countries of Southeast Asia should be included and more attention given to technological giving practices through electronic platforms and crowd funding among other topics.

EULOGY TO AN EARLY PRACTITIONER IN ASIA

Besides the desire to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge on philanthropy and development, our collective effort was sustained by the wish to pay tribute to a pioneer of international philanthropy in Asia. This issue is dedicated to Peter F. Geithner, who has played a key role in the Ford Foundation's programs and in the support for local philanthropy in the region and who died on July 2016 at the age of 84. Geithner started working at the Ford Foundation in the 1960s and in the course of its almost 30 year-employment acted as deputy representative for India in New Delhi, representative for Southeast Asia in Bangkok, as program officer for developing country programs, as the foundation's first representative for China, in Beijing, and as Regional Director of the Asia Programs in New York. He was also an adviser to other institutions with an interest in Asia including the Asia Center at Harvard University, the China Medical Board, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Sidel, 2017). In 2000, he provided inputs for the establishment of the Asia Office of the Rockefeller Foundation in Bangkok and in successive years he contributed to the formulation of the *Learning Across Boundaries in the Greater Mekong Subregion* (LAB) regional program (Sciortino, 2016).

The philanthropic model that Geithner represented and promoted operated through field offices staffed with program officers knowledgeable of the languages and socio-political dynamics in their coverage areas so as to be able to define and implement context-specific grant-making strategies responsive to local development priorities. The approach further emphasized building the individual and institutional capacity needed to address development challenges in priority sectors. In Southeast Asia, Geithner helped shape programs in rural development; community forestry; population and women's rights and sexual and reproductive health; governance and civil society, arts and humanities (as described in this issue by Zurbuchen); and peace and security (Geithner, 2008). In implementing the mission and values of the Ford Foundation, Geithner showed acumen and sensitivity:

In his own right, Peter was an extraordinary philanthropic programmer. He understood and deployed the catalytic role that an organization like Ford could play, with exquisite sensitivity to national priorities, customs and institutions. He worked both to build institutions, and to support and strengthen individual capacity, always making links between the two. His extraordinary ability to really listen to people, and his flexibility, integrity, political sense and the decentralized nature of Ford's work, made him the leading philanthropic programmer of his era in Asia of any nationality. Peter understood very early that philanthropy could build upon the long traditions of giving across Asia towards developing newer philanthropic institutions and practices. Long before most philanthropic colleagues, he deployed Ford assets to build philanthropic and non-profit institutions and infrastructure in the region. Today Asia is studded with foundations and non-profits and philanthropy has entered a period of rapid growth. These developments owe much to institutions at local, national and regional levels, for many of which Peter Geithner was the inspiration". (Sidel, 2017)

The contribution of Geithner is felt to this day through the many organizations he helped establish and the work of all those he inspired, as this issue dedicated to him testifies. I was among those who benefited from his mentoring when I became a Ford Foundation program officer in Indonesia and the Philippines and from his continued advice when regional director of the Rockefeller Foundation and later IDRC. Today, I and others who continue to share his vision and programming approach, miss his leadership as well as his advocacy of a philanthropy that is “responsive to differences”, that is “helpful to those who can make a significant contribution” in the target countries, and for which “humility and not hubris is necessary” (Geithner, 2008, p. 194). These are all values that can no longer be taken for granted in today’s climate as this issue’s articles indicate.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collection of writings by a mix of practitioners and scholars would not have been possible without the help of many, in particular the involvement of the two managing editors Rainer Einzenberger and Alexander Trupp from the planning and peer review process to the editing and final checking. Alan Feinstein and Patrick McCormick further provided advice and moral supports, shared contacts, and expressed constructive comments. The authors also deserve credit for their creativity in piecing together often limited data and for their patience in undergoing multiple substantial and editorial reviews with the hope that this collection may show the dynamism of philanthropy in Southeast Asia and become a source for more in-depth research.

Philanthropy in Southeast Asia: Between Charitable Values, Corporate Interests, and Development Aspirations

Rosalia Sciortino

► Sciortino, R. (2017). Philanthropy in Southeast Asia: Between charitable values, corporate interests, and development aspirations. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 139-163.

This article presents an overview of the evolving state of philanthropy in Southeast Asia, driven by global and local stimuli and shaped by often conflicting notions of charity, development, and business. Despite the lack of a strong enabling environment, new, 'home-grown' foundations and local forms of institutionalized giving continue to emerge. At the same time, changes in the donor landscape and shifts in philanthropic paradigms towards business-like and technocratic approaches affect how development causes are funded. In the process, gaps have begun to appear in how work by civil society organizations on human rights and social justice is funded; this may jeopardize more equitable and inclusive development.

Keywords: Charity; Development; Development Financing; Philanthropy; Southeast Asia



INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia's economic growth since the 1970s has been so impressive that foreign aid donors have felt justified in reducing their assistance, declaring that these countries 'have graduated'. Yet poverty remains widespread, socio-economic gaps persist and are widening, and economic progress has failed to lead to sustainable social and environmental paths for the countries to follow. Encouraged by the growing role of philanthropic actors in international development cooperation and as partners in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda (see also Sciortino, this issue) some have argued that in Southeast Asia philanthropy also has a role to play in fostering more inclusive growth. In this view, institutionalized private giving combined or in substitution of public funding can help address developmental gaps or, at the very least, protect the most vulnerable groups. Others, however, contend that such giving practices are irrelevant to development needs and are in fact inherently linked to personal values and self-interest, create new dependencies, and are less accountable and transparent than government spending (Hayling, Sciortino, & Anand, 2014).

This debate on the benefits of philanthropy for development in Southeast Asia acquires particular relevance in view of the unprecedented accumulation of private wealth among elites and the growing public expectation that they contribute to society. As a greater number of more diverse philanthropic organizations are being established, there is interest in learning how these organized private sources are contributing to development and to what degree the early modern

philanthropists' differentiation of philanthropy from charity as "improving opportunity rather than relieving immediate suffering" (Development Assistance Committee, 2003, p. 15) is pertinent to local giving practices. The rise in the last two decades of venture philanthropy with an emphasis on technocratic and business solutions to development problems through the likes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), social entrepreneurship, and social impact investment, also poses questions about the degree of their adoption in Southeast Asia.¹ In a region where the demarcation of private giving and business has traditionally been blurred, how do corporate interests intersect with aspirations for social improvement in home-grown philanthropy?

This article delves into these issues by giving an overview of local philanthropy in Southeast Asia, the global and local stimuli driving it, and the often contrasting notions of charity, development, and business that shape it. In examining the environment of philanthropy, I draw on literature as well as my own personal experience as a development practitioner in the region.² The emergence of local philanthropic institutions, their characteristics and ways of operating are discussed before highlighting the implications of shifting paradigms of philanthropy and the evolving donor landscape for development causes, and the beneficiaries associated with them. I conclude that gaps have begun to appear in the funding of civil society organizations working on human rights and social justice; this may jeopardize more equitable development and fostering inclusive societies.

A CULTURE OF GIVING

Southeast Asian cultures are supportive of giving and showing concern for others in a multitude of forms. In rural Thailand, for instance, water jars are traditionally placed outside people's homes for thirsty passersby, and shelter may be provided (Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium [APPC], 2001). The concept of mutual aid is also deeply ingrained in the cultural discourse of Indonesia and the Philippines, where it is called *gotong royong* and *bahaniyan* respectively and includes contributions of goods, services, and cash to others in times of need as well as of celebration (Velasco, 1996). Singapore, Brunei, and Malaysia also emphasize the spirit of *gotong royong* as part of their cultures and national identities (Remember Singapore, 2013). Vietnam has a long tradition of volunteering, providing mutual aid and communal assistance, as in the folk saying, "whole leaves wrap torn leaves" (Ninh, 2011). Remarkably, even as early as the 15th century, the royal court had introduced tax reductions for rich people who helped the poor. Later, the Nguyen dynasty called for private contributions to families affected by crop losses. Such good deeds were then recorded for posterity in monuments and posts granted by the courts (Vietnam Asia Pacific

1 Social entrepreneurship refers to both non-profit and profit organizations that apply commercial strategies to attain social and environmental outcomes such as microfinance, fair trade, 'triple bottom line' companies that besides economic gains also pursue social and environmental benefits, and, especially in Asia, cooperatives. Social impact investing is a new subset of the venture capital market that provides expansion capital to seek social impact and financial return (see further United Nations Global Compact, 2012)

2 I served as program officer in the Ford Foundation's Jakarta and Manila offices, regional director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Southeast Asia Office in Bangkok, and as regional director for Southeast and East Asia at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Singapore.

Economic Center [VAPEC] & Asia Foundation, 2011). Philanthropy also had an early start in what is now Singapore, where in the 18th century Chinese immigrants to Malaya provided funding for schools, health facilities, and religious institutions to help successive waves of migrants from extended kinship networks at a time when no government services were available (Coutts, 2014).

Across the centuries, religion has proven a powerful source of inspiration for people to donate. *Zakat*,³ a religious tax in the form of alms-giving and *sadaqah* or voluntary donations, have been practiced since the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia. In the 19th century, Arab immigrants who travelled in the region as merchants and spread their faith established *waqf*, or perpetual bequests of land or other assets, for religious, educational, or charitable purposes (Chung, Nasution, & Brown, 2010). Christian teachings have encouraged charitable behavior in the Philippines and Timor Leste since colonial time (Goh, 2005; Velasco, 1996). To this day, Buddhist believers located predominantly in mainland Southeast Asia strive to accumulate merit by giving donations to faith-based institutions and alms to the poor, while Hindu Balinese communities subscribe to the concept of social contributions or *datrta datrtrva* (Public Interest Research and Advocacy Center, 2002, p. 8; Swearer, 2010).

State ideologies, too, inspire altruism. In Vietnam, nationalist calls mobilize private resources through government channels to address the needs of the country (VAPEC & Asia Foundation, 2011). In Thailand, loyalty to the king and his family fosters giving to royal foundations and development projects (APPC, 2001). More generally, across Southeast Asia people give for a variety of reasons: expressing a sense of belonging, strengthening ethnic and religious identities, manifesting social cohesion, enhancing social status, or building patronage and social networks.

The combination of these diverse factors results in high levels of generosity, as the World Charity Index has computed since 2010, employing three indicators: 1) helping a stranger, 2) giving money to a good cause, and 3) volunteering time. In 2016, of the seven Southeast Asian countries among the 140 countries surveyed, Myanmar topped the overall index for the fourth year in the row (see also Dove, this issue). It also ranked the highest in terms of monetary giving, with 91% of people who donated money in the last month. Indonesia was second globally with 75%, while Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia, ranked among the top twenty-five countries, with percentages of more than half of the population having given for a good cause (Charities Aid Foundation [CAF], 2016). It is interesting to note that donation levels do not seem to be a direct reflection of a country's economic conditions, with Myanmar being among the least developed countries of Southeast Asia, and Indonesia being less wealthy than Thailand, Malaysia, or Singapore.

Local surveys confirm a widespread willingness to volunteer and donate, and a general preference for giving to individuals rather than organizations. However, patterns are dynamic and differentiate along socio-cultural lines. The biannual Individual Giving Survey (IGS) in Singapore found a decrease in the rate of people making donations in the previous year from 83% in 2014 to 76% in 2016, but a doubling of donations to institutions. Age and ethnicity were significant differentials,

3 There is a dissenting opinion that, being an obligatory taxation, *zakat* should not be categorized as charity or philanthropy (see Cogswell, 2002)

with Malay citizens more likely to donate and middle-aged people being the most prevalent donors (National Volunteer & Philanthropy Center [NVPC], 2015). In the Philippines, a 2006 study on individual giving found that 99% of the population had donated to various causes in some form (Venture for Fund Raising & Social Weather Station, 2006).⁴ Interestingly, a greater proportion of the poor gives than the rich and this in higher percentages (Burgos & Quismundo, 2011). This is in line with findings in Malaysia and other parts of the region, as well as beyond, including the US and UK (Anderson, 2015; Cogswell, 2002; Ward, 2001). Not only are a country's economic development level and a person's income level poor predictors of individual donations in Southeast Asia, but – against a common expectation among philanthropy experts and practitioners – the norms and practices related to giving are hardly the product of enabling legal, fiscal, or regulatory systems, nor have they led to the formation of such comprehensive systems, at least for now.

AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT FOR PHILANTHROPY

The institutionalization of giving, or *philanthropization*, is a recent phenomenon in Southeast Asia. Most governments have started only in the last two decades to legislate efforts to give, allocate, receive, and report donations and regularize the non-profit sector, including philanthropic and charitable institutions, with the less developed countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste at an initial stage of experimentation. An exception is the Philippines, which stands apart for its very early appreciation of the role of the private non-profit sector in national development. Foundations were already acknowledged under Philippine law in 1906 while the country was an American colony, and later endorsed as part of democratizing reforms: Unique in the region, the 1987 Philippine constitution expressly recognizes the contribution of non-government organizations (NGOs) and other non-profit organizations, pledges financing to those that promote social welfare, and provides incentives for philanthropic contributions. Since then, fiscal schemes have been established to grant tax breaks for donations made to private foundations and other bodies devoted to non-profit causes, whether religious, scientific, or promoting welfare (Velasco, 1996). Receiving organizations also benefit from various exemptions, such as from income tax, duties, charges on foreign donations, and from donor's gift tax. These provisions are particularly generous for those who have acquired donee status from the *Philippine Council for NGO Certification* (PCNC).

Fiscal incentives together with attention to professional standards and non-profit organizations' autonomy and influence in formulating public policy have led to a highly professional philanthropic sector in the Philippines. Notable are umbrella organizations like the *Philippine Business for Social Progress* (PBSP), which was founded in 1970 and today comprises more than 260 member businesses that collectively fund development interventions. Experienced bodies, such as the *Association of Foundations* and the *League of Corporate Foundations*, advocate for the interests of their members, and programs and networks strengthen the field and corroborate emerging philanthropic

4 Remarkably, the Philippines did not do well in the last World Giving Index (CAF, 2016), but in view of the nature of the studies it is not possible to determine if such difference is due to methodology or the different time period.

approaches. For instance, the *Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia* (ISEA) and the *Philippine Social Enterprise Network* (PHILSEN) were established in the late 1990s with the rise of the social entrepreneurship movement (British Council, 2015).

Recently, Singapore, and to a lesser extent also Indonesia, have followed the Philippines in emphasizing the relevance of philanthropy and corporate engagement in development. Since the early 2000s, the Singaporean government has systematically worked to reduce its role as the largest funder of the non-profit sector either directly or indirectly through government-backed foundations, instead encouraging its growing concentration of billionaires to donate to service organizations. Policy innovations include giving tax deductions to government-selected charities and matching funds for donations in education and the arts. The government has also built support infrastructure, such as bank advisory services and capacity-building entities. The main ones are the *National Volunteer and Philanthropy Center* established in 1999 to promote and coordinate volunteering and philanthropy, and the *Community Foundation of Singapore* founded in 2008 to connect local donors with needy communities in the city-state.

Aware of burgeoning wealth in neighboring countries, the Singaporean government has promoted the city as a regional philanthropic center, building on its status as Southeast Asia's financial hub. Attractive conditions have been created to draw in international charities active elsewhere in Asia to establish their offices in Singapore, and for foreign individual donors to use the city-state's financial services. In 2011, *SymAsia* – an umbrella foundation managed by Credit Suisse – was granted charitable status for Asia's wealthy to channel their donations to elected causes (Sharma, 2013).

Financially savvy Singapore has also been quick to adopt venture philanthropy and to promote it regionally. The *Asian Venture Philanthropy Network* (AVPN) and *Impact Investing Exchange* (IIX) Asia are among an increasing number of impact investment firms and funds that aim to “connect the Wall Streets of the world to the backstreets of underserved communities” (Impact Investment Exchange [IIX], 2017) through financing of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Asia that pursue positive social and environmental outcomes as well as monetary gains (Šoštarić, 2015). Planning for the future, in 2016 the government together with the *Tote Board Foundation* founded the *Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise* (raiSE) to promote social enterprises and impact investments.

The Indonesian government has also taken new steps to capitalize on rising corporate wealth and incentivize private contributions to development initiatives. In 2007, Indonesia was among the first countries globally and the only in Southeast Asia to make CSR mandatory with Law 40/2007 on Limited Liability Companies, which obliges corporations exploiting natural resources to assign a percentage of their profits to charity or CSR-related projects (Gentile, 2014). In the same year, Law 25/2007 specified the corporate responsibilities of foreign investors, and a ministerial regulation set the percentage that state-owned enterprises ought to direct to nine sustainable development sectors, including partnership and financial aid (Tanaya, Gunawan, Pusaka, & Nugroho, 2016). Since 2010 the Indonesian government has also required listed companies to report on the effects of their activities on society and the environment. To sweeten these obligations, which a large part of the business sector sees as burdensome, Government Regulation 93/2010 provides annual tax

deductions up to a maximum of 5% of net revenue earned during the previous fiscal year for spending in fields like disaster management, research, sports, education, and social infrastructure (Assegaf Hamzah & Partners [AHP], 2012).

Legislative reforms also extend to religious giving. Building on Law 38/1999, which first stipulated the management of *zakat* and validated the organizations, semi-public and private, to collect it, Law 23/2011 sought to exert greater government's control over financial flows and help semi-governmental bodies better exploit the *zakat* to achieve improved welfare in the country (Saidurrahman, 2013).

Such innovations are spreading throughout the whole region. For instance, encouraged by Indonesia's bold approach, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand are now attempting to institutionalize CSR by working to overcome companies' resistance to government interference. The *ASEAN CSR Network* (ACN) was also established in 2011 to promote CSR as an integral part of development in the region (ASEAN CSR Network, 2017). Other regional venues launched in the last decade to discuss emerging philanthropic approaches include the *Philanthropy in Asia Summit*, the *AVPN Conference*, and the *Southeast Asia International Islamic Philanthropy Conference*.

These advancements, however, have yet to create a comprehensive fiscal and legal environment for philanthropy. A recent study of the high- and middle-level economies of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, acknowledges recent positive efforts and the possibility that the charitable sector in the region can progress in ways not even yet imagined, but somberly states:

Overall, this study finds the environment for philanthropy in the region to be quite challenging. Tax policies are either neutral or ineffective in incentivizing philanthropy; opportunities for the charitably-minded to gain the skills necessary to address complex social problems are lacking; partnerships between civil society organizations and funders that enable the capabilities of each other are rare; and the data that would assist the nascent field in quickly prototyping and innovating are non-existent and to some extent resisted. (Anand, 2014, p. 7)

In particular, several constraints were identified: poor data availability and transparency; inadequate benefits related to income and inheritance taxes; ambiguous legal definitions and lack of policies specific to the sector, including no legal distinction between grant-giving and grant-seeking foundations (true even in the Philippines); poor enforcement of laws when they exist (as in the case of mandatory CSR in Indonesia); and limited learning opportunities for donors. The generally mixed attitude of philanthropists towards NGOs seen as playing an oppositional role, and government restrictions in controlling them, have also affected the development of the philanthropic sector, since NGOs are the typical grant recipients. As an example, most NGOs are unable to register as charities in Singapore and, therefore, remain excluded from the privileges tied to charity status, foremost being exemption from income taxes and being allowed to raise funds publicly (Anand, 2014).

These observations are echoed in the *Index of Philanthropy Freedom 2015*, the first-ever global report on legal and regulatory incentives and barriers to giving (Adelman, Barnett, & Russell, 2015). With the exception of the Philippines, all countries of Southeast Asia – as also in the rest of Asia – scored below the global average

on the three main indicators: 1) ease of registering and operating civil society organizations; 2) tax policies for deductions, credits, and exemptions; and 3) ease of sending and receiving cash and in-kind goods across borders. The report points to the limited space for human rights groups and other NGOs to operate due to elaborate administrative and legal barriers, and to limitations on public gatherings and freedom of expression. For instance, Malaysia shows a tendency to employ domestic security and counter-terrorism laws against NGOs, while Vietnam makes it impossible for organizations working on human rights, anti-corruption, or other sensitive issues to register. Improvements were only recorded in Myanmar, where in 2014, revisions to the Association Registration Law liberalized the country's regulations for civil society groups. In a climate of renewed authoritarianism and shrinking civil society space across the region (Amnesty International, 2017), such restrictions can only be expected to become tighter. Rules and regulations also do not encourage cross-border (including intra-regional) philanthropy. The most apparent case is Singapore which, in spite of its eagerness to attract international organizations and donors, has an 80:20 ratio rule that prescribes that 80% of funds raised from the public must be used locally (Hayling et al., 2014). More generally, the report concludes that the environment for philanthropy in the region is underdeveloped and does not provide a favorable fiscal space for promoting donations or developing the nonprofit sector (Adelman, Barnett, & Russell, 2015).

EXOGENOUS PROMOTION OF LOCAL PHILANTHROPY: THE PARADIGM SHIFT

In spite of the uncertain environment and the enduring dominance of individual donations, home-grown foundations and other forms of institutionalized giving are multiplying. This is especially apparent in the wealthier countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, but even in the poorer countries, the philanthropic sector is gradually emerging. Proliferation drivers for local philanthropy include: ever increasing amounts of accumulated wealth; public awareness of growing socio-economic disparities; mounting pressure on the better off and corporations to contribute to sustainable development; government's backing down from providing public services and instead seeking partnerships with the private sector; and civil society groups' search for alternatives to the declining support of foreign donors (Johnson, Johnson, & Kingman, 2015). Most recently, new revenue opportunities promised by venture philanthropy have generated an unprecedented buzz for social engagement in the region.

An enabling role has historically been played by international, especially American, donors and foundations – foremost among them the Ford Foundation – that have promoted local philanthropy in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world since the 1980s. These foundations supported initiatives to build the philanthropic sector in the countries where they worked in the belief that “philanthropy has an important role to play in addressing human challenges and strengthening civil society” and that ultimately it would be more sustainable than foreign funding to tackle development issues (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 4; Johnson & Simmons, 2003). In later years, lower international aid levels earmarked for Asia (Bhattacharjee, Culshaw & Anand, 2004) strengthened the motivation to support local funding sources that could

continue nurturing the non-profit sector after foreign donors withdraw (Alliance Magazine, 1998). Eventually, the focus became more normative as foundations shifted their emphasis “from encouraging a culture of philanthropy per se to promoting philanthropy that advances social change” (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 8). The Ford Foundation and like-minded foundations, for instance, increasingly promoted social justice philanthropy in which grant-making is directed at systemic or institutional change and the overcoming of economic and environmental inequities to expand opportunities for disadvantaged populations (see also Fauzia, this issue).

Along with these philanthropic concepts, practices and institutions originating in the West were also spread, as American foundations tended to replicate their experience. In Southeast Asia, like in other parts of the world, they aimed to create the conditions that, based on their own history, were considered necessary for local philanthropy to take off, including a clear legal framework, a tax structure providing incentives, an accountability system for grant-givers and grantees, sufficient institutional capacity, and sufficient resources (Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support, 2013). To realize this vision, they funded a wide variety of programs ranging from capacity building, research, and cross-country exchanges to the enactment of fiscal and regulatory reforms for the non-profit sector, the development of accreditation systems (such as PCNC), and the establishment of indigenous foundations and foundation-like entities.

Favored institutional models included community foundations that were considered suitable vehicles to connect local needs to resources, and – often as part of a donor’s exit strategy – endowed grant-making foundations similar to American foundations working internationally. They were thus expected to be fully devoted to grant-making, to be operated by professional officers, and governed by an independent board. Their expenditures would be covered by gains from investing endowment funds, and their grants would operationalize a structured program strategy that would pursue specific development goals and would privilege civil society organizations as recipients of support. Telling examples include endowed foundations established in the 1990s through grants and debt-for-development swaps under bilateral programs with the US, Canada, and other partners, like the *Foundation for Philippine Environment* (FPE) and the *Foundation for Sustainable Societies* (FSS) in the Philippines; the *Indonesian Biodiversity Foundation* (Kehati) in Indonesia; and the *Development Cooperation Foundation* (DCF) in Thailand (Baron, 1997; Ong, 2010; Sabio & Jaegal, 2010). Later, governments in the region also initiated grant-making foundations with public funds, but operated and managed semi-independently by private boards of trustees. Even if these hybrid foundations do not fit the classic definition, it will become clear below that they have established nevertheless a significant presence in Southeast Asia and in the way they operate to this day best represent the imported prototype, including in their funding of NGOs, where governments allow it.

International agencies also spearheaded the creation of national and regional networks, of which the most important was the Manila-based *Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium* (APPC). Building on a series of conferences, the APPC was launched in 1995 with the support of the Ford Foundation and other private and corporate donors in Australia, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States. As a network of grant-making institutions, the APPC aimed to promote local philanthropy and

strengthen indigenous grant-making entities within each country. Activities included a human resources program run by PBSP; a research program entrusted to the Asia Foundation; and a program of networking and exchanges for staff and principals of philanthropic organizations (Alliance Magazine, 1998).

The exogenous strengthening of local philanthropy, with all its intended and unintended upshots, was eventually transformed by a drastic paradigmatic shift in the early 2000s with the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the global rise of venture philanthropy. Its business-derived and technocratic paradigm dismissed “the cultural, humanistic, and political sides of the equation” (Anft, 2015) directing grants towards technical aspects of agriculture, health, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and microfinance, instead of towards the ‘soft’ and less quantifiable fields, such as human rights, humanities, culture, and the arts (Feinstein, 2012). Following Thomas Friedman’s (2005) view of the world as “flat”, development problems and solutions were now conceived as ‘global’ and managed from headquarters. This challenged the kind of socially-engaged and contextual grant-making practiced in Southeast Asia by American and, to a lesser extent, by Japanese foundations such as the Toyota, Japan, and Nippon foundations. Even if these ‘traditional’ foundations did not fully adopt the more ideological tenets of the new paradigm and often kept to the old rhetorics, their modalities changed. Increasingly field offices had to relinquish their functions, and if not shut down in the name of efficiency (as was the case of the Ford Foundation closing its Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam offices and leaving only that in Indonesia open), they have been left providing little more than logistical support with limited responsive grant-making in Southeast Asia (with the Rockefeller Foundation’s regional office in Bangkok being a case in point.) With this reduced presence, direct grant-making to local, especially civil society organizations suffered as the new foundations not only had other priorities, but also chose to fund from a distance and through intermediary grantees in their countries of origin. This bias clearly emerges from a quick scan of the BMGF’s grant database, which shows a scarcity of local institutions among grantees in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia.⁵ Moreover, as Feinstein (2010, p. 92) summarizes:

There is a corresponding devaluing of certain modalities of foundation support that were a hallmark of the old foundations, but do not fit well with the results-driven approach. These include, for instance, support for individual fellowships and scholarships, for which the Rockefeller and Ford foundations were famous; the building up of academic fields and departments; capacity-building grants including operational support for local institutions; and support for developing local philanthropy. None of these have great attraction in the new approach.

Direct promotion of home-grown philanthropy diminished, and this affected organizations on the ground, including some high-profile associations like APPC, which was absorbed into the Asia Foundation’s giving program *Give2Asia* in 2011 and eventually became inactive. Some organizations in countries where field offices

⁵ An exception in Southeast Asia is Vietnam, where the government received substantial amounts.

have survived may still receive funding, but at the lower level and for participation in global initiatives. For example, the *Philanthropy Association of Indonesia* (IPA), established in 2003 with Ford Foundation's funding, has come to represent Indonesia as one of the four pilot countries for the implementation of the *SDG Philanthropy Platform*, spearheaded by the Ford Foundation to foster greater local philanthropic involvement in the achievement of the SDGs (Filantropi Indonesia, 2017). An exception to this declining trend, deserving greater analysis, is the regional expansion of the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and its continued funding of those local foundations it helped establish such as the *TIFA Foundation of Indonesia* in 2000 (Darmawan Triwibowo, Director of TIFA, March 2017).

As old and new paradigms exist alongside each other, cross-fertilization of ideas and practices has become more diversified. Funding streams in the region originate from a wider range of international foundations including those subscribing to a more business- and less social justice-oriented model of philanthropy. Resources are channeled through more assorted layers of intermediaries, and for-profit organizations play a greater role in fostering local philanthropy of a different kind. In the late 1990s, CSR was introduced to Southeast Asia by locally-based multinational companies (MNCs) to ameliorate environmental and social damage caused by mining and the exploitation of natural resources. They, and Western-based MNCs through their local supply chains, served as a model for CSR programs of local companies in the region, to the extent that some have described them as "Western mimicry" (Amran & Siti-Nabiha, 2009, p. 358). The concept of venture philanthropy that originated in the UK and US has also found fertile ground in Southeast Asia, as exemplified in the previously mentioned Singapore-based AVPN, which is modeled after the *European Venture Philanthropy Association* (EVPA) and shares with it the same founder chairman (Asian Venture Philanthropy Network, 2017). More and more international banks, such as Credit Suisse and LGT Capital Partners, provide locally based services to philanthropists and impact investors and fund research on the philanthropic sector in Southeast Asia.

As part of the paradigm shift, social enterprises or simply enterprises that promise financial as well as social returns are now the privileged partners of external donors, and NGOs, when funded, are expected to provide operational services rather than advocating for social change. In parallel, efforts to promote home-grown philanthropy no longer target givers of all financial means and backgrounds. Taking center stage now are the extremely rich – starting from 'High Net Worth Individuals' (HNWI), who have more than USD 1 million in liquid financial assets, onwards up to local billionaires, such as in *The Giving Pledge*, which was initiated by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffet in 2010 in the US and later expanded to emerging economies. Despite criticism as a public relations stunt culturally inappropriate for Asia (Wilkson, 2013), two Southeast Asian billionaires, Dato Tahir, chairman and CEO of the *Mayapada Group* and the *Tahir Foundation* in Indonesia, and Vincent Tan Chee Yioun, founder of *Berjaya Group Berhad* and chairman of *Better Malaysia Foundation* in Malaysia, have responded to the call to donate the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes (The Giving Pledge, 2017). In 2013, the Gates and Tahir foundations made a joint commitment of USD 65 million each to the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria*, with 75% earmarked for Indonesia (Morrison & Bliss, 2013). This partnership continued in 2014 with the launch of the *Indonesia Health Fund* to attract

private and corporate donations during the subsequent five years for better health care in the country, in collaboration with eight Indonesian “philanthropist tycoons” who pledged to donate USD 5 million each (Anh Ton, 2014). These developments are a strong indication of how much personal wealth has been accumulated in the region, and how it is being increasingly harnessed for philanthropy.

FAMILY-CENTERED ‘INDIGENIZATION’ OF PHILANTHROPY

As capacity-building efforts from outside the region wane, the process of indigenization is accelerating regionally and nationally. For instance, after the demise of the APPC in 2015 Singaporean philanthropists Stanley Tan and Laurence Lien and Indonesian philanthropist Cherie Nursalim founded the *Asian Philanthropy Circle* (APC). This private membership platform aims to “advance a distinct Asian brand of philanthropy to accelerate the public good in Asia” and foster peer learning and collaboration among Asian philanthropists in order to maximize impacts (Coutts, 2015).

What this ‘distinct brand’ implies for Southeast Asia still needs to be fleshed out, but as noted in the previous section, it does not seem to require all of the key regulatory and fiscal elements generally considered necessary for local philanthropy to grow. It also appears that most home-grown organizations have not followed the path international foundations initially envisioned. As hinted above, most of the region’s endowed foundations are government-backed rather than privately funded institutions, while individual and family donors generally operate through informal or corporate channels. Already in 1997, a study by the Asia Foundation identified these conditions as specific to philanthropy in East Asian, including Southeast Asian countries:

- There is great diversity in the types of philanthropic institutions and foundation-like entities in East Asia. Unlike the U.S., however, there are still very few private foundations based on individual or family wealth. . . .
- Most philanthropic entities in the region are corporate foundations or, even more commonly, corporate giving programs funded on an annual basis rather than endowed. . . .
- The emergence of several new kinds of grant-making foundations, which are at the interface of the public and private domains – those which are endowed with public funds but managed by at least semi-private boards of trustees. (Baron, 1997)

In relation to the scarcity of individual foundations, it has been argued that their establishment has been discouraged by cultural values that inhibit displays of wealth. Rich individuals are expected to be communal and prioritize their families, clans, or patronage networks to justify as well as build their social position rather than endow an independent organization (Baron, 1997). The fact that wealth is concentrated in the hands of ethnic Chinese, who must be cautious in the face of varying degrees of discrimination throughout Southeast Asia, may also have acted as a deterring factor, although it may also have had the opposite result of driving them towards philanthropy in order “to secure a social license to operate” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2015, p. 23).

In the less frequent occasions when foundations are formally established, they are mostly family ventures, with funds coming from members of a single, often multi-generational family with strong ties to the family business. The UBS-INSEAD study on family philanthropy in Asia, which included Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, identified “ensuring the continuity of family values or creating a lasting legacy” as the most common cause for establishing a foundation (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, p. 17). Other considerations seen as key to the foundation as well as to the underlying business were developing family cohesion and enhancing leadership and management capabilities of younger generations. Less commonly enunciated pragmatic reasons were exerting influence for political or business purposes; patronage; and increasing standing in the community. Like the unstructured giving of prosperous individuals, these family foundations are also meant to meet communal expectations and, if in diaspora, maintain a connection to the country of origin, most often China (Hayling et al., 2014; UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012).

The institutionalization of what still remains a minority of philanthropic initiatives is a recent process. Of the 203 family foundations surveyed in the UBS-INSEAD study more than 75% were legally established after 1980, and about 60% after 1990. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, about 50% were only founded after 2000. This is in line with observations that intergenerational change is occurring and the younger generation is more inclined toward institutionalized philanthropy (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, pp. 13, 42). In this initial stage, Southeast Asian family foundations are operationally oriented and mix grant-making activities with direct implementation of programs. They also raise funds from other sources for their projects, thus becoming competitors with the very organizations they could be funding. When grants are provided, they tend to be ad hoc and given to persons and institutions known to the family. Often personnel and administrative systems from family business are used to simplify processes and economize resources. Some foundations will also make use of company profits and not only personal wealth for philanthropic engagements. Such was the case of 22% of the family foundations surveyed in the UBS-INSEAD (2012, p. 23) study, which reports:

One has to be cognizant of the fact that in Asia it is hard to establish degrees of separation between family philanthropy and company philanthropy/CSR. Often what is seen as individual or family giving is ‘company giving’ now practiced through the establishment of company foundations and trusts. Funds flowing into these foundations include those of owners, investors, employees, and other stakeholders.

This intertwining of family foundations with family business is unsurprising in a region where “the family continues to be an exceptionally strong locus for business and philanthropic activities” (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, p. 16). Moreover it reflects a more general bias of the philanthropy sector in Southeast Asia towards corporate entities and giving programs and business-derived approaches.

CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY PERVADES THE LANDSCAPE

Institutional models reflecting the complex relationship between philanthropy and business vary from complete fusion to separation of business and philanthropic functions as can be seen in Table 1, with the great majority maintaining close connections between brand, funding, management, and focus of giving.

PHILANTHROPY AND BUSINESS INTERRELATIONSHIP MODEL		
Mode	Mode of Action	Example
Complete Fusion	The business is conceived and runs with the objective of social impact, but operates as a for-profit entity.	Today, in India, a family group runs an extensive network of for-profit educational and healthcare facilities that have made a substantial contribution to higher education in India. The group's corporate foundation also supports thousands of young Indians with scholarships.
Close Connection	Brand The family brand is leveraged across the business, social, and political sectors.	The Ayala Foundation is a foundation funded by the Ayala Corporation, the principal holding company of one of the largest Philippine family groups. The Foundation also solicits funds from other Ayala Group companies and from third parties. It also benefits from bearing the well-known family name.
	Funding Profits from the business sustain the philanthropic activities on a systematic basis.	The Tunaram Group in Singapore is involved in fast moving, consumer goods, and energy and infrastructure projects. Profits are used to support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and family philanthropic initiatives in Singapore, other parts of Asia, and Africa
	Management The philanthropic activity is actively managed with the support of business executives.	One of the companies run by Thailand's Chearavanont family – the Magnolia Corporation – has a CSR program that is largely administered by company executives, who are also integral parts of the business side.
	Contributions The focus of giving is closely tied to the focus of business.	The founder of Bigfoot Entertainment – a film and media group with the most substantial operations in the Philippines – has established a foundation which provides education in villages in the Philippines through the use of film and new media.
Partial Separation	Formal Separation, Crossover Benefits The philanthropic activity is separately funded and managed, but may enjoy crossover benefits from the business.	Yusuf Achmed, the Chairman and Managing Director of one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in India, contributes to health care in developing countries.
	Formal Separation, Minimal Benefits The philanthropic activity is separately funded and managed, and crossover benefits are minimized.	A major Thai family is extremely private about its substantial philanthropic activities. The philanthropy venture does not receive funds from the business, has its own management, and is named differently from both the family name and the business name.
Complete Separation	Principled Delinking As a matter of principle, philanthropic and business activities are kept completely apart.	The personal foundation of an established Singaporean entrepreneur in the fashion, hospitality, and luxury industries operates on a distinct grant-making agenda while her business invests in CSR and sustainability initiatives.

Table 1. Philanthropy and Business. (UBS Philanthropy Services & ISEAD, 2012, p. 4).

The rare corporate foundations that are established as separate entities still continue to promote brand loyalty and strengthen the corporate reputation of the ‘mother company’ through the use of logos and brand names and by engaging in project areas relevant to their corporate interests. Not many have endowments or yearly budgets, and resources are often allocated following requests from the company management and board members. This, compounded by the lack of public disclosure laws, makes it difficult to estimate their size, but it appears that most initiatives are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. A few, however, have annual funding budgets in the millions of dollars (see Table 2), with some of the largest even surpassing those of locally based international foundations. For instance, the Ford Foundation’s budget for Indonesia in 2015 was USD 14 million, and thus less than that of the Tahir Foundation and the Chairul Tanjung Foundation, which each had budgets of USD 19.7 million in that financial year (DFAT, 2015, p. 5)⁶.

Indonesia	Tahir Foundation	USD 19.7 million (FY 2015)
	Chairul Tanjung Foundation	USD 19.7 million (FY 2015)
	Sampoerna Foundation	USD 14.9 million (FY 2015)
Philippines	The Ramon Aboitiz Foundation	USD 11.7 million (FY 2014)
	Ayala Foundation	USD 8.4 million (FY 2015)
Vietnam	Kind Heart Foundation of Vina Group	USD 11.4 million (FY 2015)

Table 2. Annual Funding Budgets of the Largest Company-Related/Company-Owned (Mostly Family-Based) Foundations in Selected Southeast Asian Countries FY 2015 or FY 2014. (DFAT, 2015, p. 5).

In spite of their growing significance in the home-grown philanthropy sector, corporate foundations still do not match the resources and reach of religious and faith-based institutions (see section below). Moreover, they generally have less spending capacity than government-backed yet autonomous grant-making foundations, which, as previously mentioned, feature prominently in Southeast Asia. For instance, in Singapore, the two largest operations are the government-backed *Tote Board*, which was established in 1988 and gives out annual grants from gaming surpluses ranging between USD 357 million and USD 714 million per year to vulnerable communities, and the *Community Chest*, with annual funding of about USD 57 million to voluntary welfare organizations. Only then comes the largest private foundation, the *Lee Foundation* of the Lee Group, which since its creation in 1952 through 2015 donated a total of about USD 714 million to various causes (Chan, 2015). In the Philippines and Indonesia, the already mentioned environmental foundations based on debt swaps are among the largest grant-givers, with endowments topping millions

⁶ Figures in this section are given for indication purposes only.

of dollars and a large grantee base mostly composed of NGOs. In Thailand, the *Thai Health Promotion Foundation*, an “autonomous government agency”, has annual revenue of about USD 120 million derived from a 2% surcharge on excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol (ThaiHealth, 2017), which makes it the largest funder, especially of civil society organizations, in the country.

In assessing the financial relevance of corporate philanthropy, we should also note that the bulk of it is channeled through a wide range of often informal business-related philanthropic initiatives undertaken by the company itself. An increasing number of local companies have adopted CSR as a model of philanthropy that is also effective for risk management purposes and as a branding and marketing tool, and this includes the numerous state-owned enterprises expected by law or society to follow responsible business practices. Conducive factors have been the greater availability of training and support, having to comply with global market requirements, and, in some countries, pressure from NGOs. Government intervention has also been crucial. In Indonesia, after the enactment of the CSR Law, self-reported engagement increased from 27% of 376 listed companies in 2008 to 94% of 486 listed companies in 2013 (Tanaya et al., 2016). In Thailand, fiscal incentives have been a primary motive for Thai companies to adopt CSR, followed by cost management and government pressure. As early as 2003 it was noted that their level of CSR penetration was higher than among international companies in the country and in comparison to domestic companies in neighboring countries (Chambers, Chapple, Moon, & Sullivan, 2003) – a trend still observable today. Whether due to carrots or sticks, between 2001 and 2013, CSR boomed in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand while it started to grow in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. At the time, Myanmar was out of the picture, but after its opening to the outside world CSR has been gaining ground there, too (see Dove, this issue; Liong, 2013). This expansion, however, says nothing of the quality of reporting, performance, or the comprehensive nature of the approach. A recent review of CSR in Asian, including Southeast Asian, economies observed an inclination to ‘give back’ to communities through financial donations and non-cash contributions, with too little attention being paid to accountability and the enactment of gender, ethical, employment, and environmental standards in business practices (Sharma, 2013). This resonates with a recent regional baseline study on the topic that concluded: “Unfortunately, the existing trends of CSR in Southeast Asia (e.g., ‘voluntary’, ‘top-bottom’, and ‘philanthropic’) are insufficient means for businesses to respect human rights” (Thomas & Chandra, 2014, p. 7).

Social entrepreneurship and social impact investment are also proving popular in Southeast Asia, especially among younger generations of philanthropists (UBS Philanthropy Services & ISEAD, 2012, p. 52). The number of social enterprises initially started as non-profit organizations and now operating as businesses is growing. Long-standing examples in Thailand include the *Population and Community Development Association*, which provides diversified services from environmental and health programs to microcredit, and the *Doi Tung Development Project*, which is involved in high-end tourism, handicrafts, and organic food. Their footsteps are followed by a myriad of small and medium businesses concerned with the environment, fair trade, and healthy lifestyles (Chhina, Petersik, Loh, & Evans, 2014).

Gradually, new-generation social enterprises have emerged that are fully for-profit, but committed to pursuing social goals. In business speak this is presented as aiming for a double (financial and social) or even triple (financial, social, and environmental) bottom line. For instance, the Social Enterprise Quality Index (SEQI) developed by PHILSEN in 2009 set out criteria for “doing well” in terms of business performance, “doing good” in terms of social performance, and “doing just” in upholding the environment, cultural soundness, and gender equity (Ballesteros & Llanto, 2017). Although it is still to be proven the degree to which this multiple bottom line can be achieved and to what extent social enterprises can be accountable, effective, and profitable, they have gained the trust of venture philanthropists, foreign and local private investors, and corporate foundations (DFAT, 2015). A sign of widespread regional interest was the launching of the USD 36 million *DBS Foundation* in Singapore in 2015 to mark the city-state’s 50th anniversary with the official mandate to champion social entrepreneurship. Since then, it has provided capital to 80 social enterprises in Singapore, India, Indonesia, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (DBS Foundation, n.d.)

Through these various philanthropic forms, a multitude of causes are funded. Generally, giving by corporate and family foundations concentrates on education (especially to construct buildings or provide scholarships) and, to a lesser extent, on medical care, preferably hospital buildings and helping to provide treatment for underprivileged groups, on community development in the area surrounding the company, and on ad hoc responses to disasters or community events. Contributions to arts and culture, human rights, gender equity, and the environment are minimal, although younger philanthropists seem more interested in such causes than their parents. CSR activities do support arts and culture, but more generally focus on mitigating environmental impacts and meeting social needs. Compelled to deliver that multiple bottom line, social enterprises opt to provide services or undertake other profit-making social welfare activities in their field of choice. A 2014 study in Singapore found that 56% of social enterprises provided services (including business-related), 10% were engaged in food and beverage, 10% in education, 8% in trade, and 6% in other fields (Prakash & Tan, 2014, p. 13).

Irrespective of the focus, there are few cases of the kind of philanthropy oriented towards structural change, as US foundations used to promote in local philanthropy. Among the few examples active in the public arena is the Singaporean Lien Foundation’s ‘radical philanthropy’, which explicitly aims to get at the roots of problems in elder care and end-of-life care, child education, and water (Lien Foundation, 2017). The majority of foundations, CSR initiatives, and social enterprises are willing to work on ameliorating social and environmental problems with some intervention in economic processes, but they avoid engagement in political processes, policy reforms, or governance and human rights support. As a recent report concluded: “One finding that can be generalized across the region is that few philanthropic organizations engage in policy-related discussions or activities” (DFAT, 2015, p. 7).

Some relate this stand to a heightened concern for reputational risks and potential conflict with the government and other parties that may also affect their business interests. As a result, NGOs may not be funded or may see their funds decline if they engage in advocacy for structural change. This was the case for two leading women’s organizations in Malaysia that lost corporate funding for women’s health and shelter

when they started challenging human rights abuses and advocating for socio-economic reforms (Cogswell, 2002, p. 118). Others note that philanthropists' hesitancy does not extend to using personal influence and connections, and at times funding, to advance their own agenda or the priorities of their company. Still others argue that the mixing of corporate and social development purposes may not always serve the public interest as illustrated by the philanthropic activities of tobacco companies and related foundations, like the *Sampoerna Foundation* in Indonesia (Sciortino, 2015; Tandilittin & Luetge, 2015), and that it may even obstruct needed reforms:

Elites' control of political, economic, social and cultural power can also be a barrier to change. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, a small group of families control large sections of economic activity, which means they provide many millions of jobs. But they may also restrict access to resources, such as land ownership, through their efforts to protect their business interests. Some of the most significant philanthropic contributors may also be those standing in the way of important economic and political reforms. (DFAT, 2015, p. 7)

These and other possible reservations about the genuine motivations of CSR and more generally corporate philanthropy contrast with the broad trust enjoyed by religious organizations and their being upheld as the 'good Samaritan' in society, though they may not necessarily be more transparent in their practices.

IN BETWEEN CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY

Religious institutions can be seen as the precursors of institutionalized giving in Southeast Asia. As early as the 16th century, the Catholic Church launched its charitable legacy in the Philippines. During the Spanish occupation, gifts received from the wealthy were channelled to *obras pias* or charitable foundations for the sick or for orphans, as well as to finance maritime trade and other activities that would benefit the Church and its endeavours. Centuries later, during the American colonial period, Protestant missions started charitable activities and funded orphanages, hospices, hospitals, schools, and universities, at times with substantial support from American philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller (Angara, 2016). Christian charities and their networks of hospices, hospitals, and schools were also established in other parts of the region following the spread of European mercantile and colonial interests (Goh, 2005). In Muslim Southeast Asia, the early *waqf* funds established in the 19th century contributed not only to the building of mosques and burial grounds but also to the construction of urban infrastructure still visible today, as in Malaysia's Georgetown and Singapore (Brown, 2013; Nagaoka, 2016).

This faith-based giving tradition continues to figure prominently in Southeast Asia in terms of numbers of religious organizations, the level of donations they receive, and the extent of the funded and implemented activities. In Singapore, of the 2,217 registered charities in 2015 more than the half, or 1,290, were religious charities, trailed by charities promoting welfare (383), health (134), education (121), arts and heritage (137), community (87), and sports (59) (Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth, 2016). In the Philippines, the Catholic Church and its religious orders form the

largest non-profit organization in the country with an unmatched network of funded or affiliated organizations including health and educational institutions, schools, media agencies, and community groups (Cariño, Fernan III, Martinez, Barlis, & Tupas, 2001; Fernan, 2002). In Thailand, for the majority Buddhist population temples are the locus of philanthropy both in terms of giving as well as receiving, distributing a large part of the collected donations to a variety of social causes, including care to AIDS patients and for community development activities (Wattanasiritham, 2007).

Mosques play a similar function in Muslim communities across Southeast Asia. They collect and distribute donations, religious taxes, and manage the assets of *waqf* endowments for assistance to surrounding communities, also in countries where Islam is a minority religion. For instance, in Singapore there are more than 100 registered *waqf*, and in Thailand, diverse Muslim ethnic groups all have their specific *waqf* to fund religious, educational, and welfare institutions, buildings, and activities for their communities (Brown, 2013; Brown, 2014; Prapertchob, 1991). Aside from traditional charity forms centred in mosques and Islamic boarding schools and few foundations started by wealthy Muslims, in the last two decades professional Islamic philanthropic organizations have emerged, which are specifically devoted to the management of financial resources for socio-economic purposes. They have revitalized investments of cash *waqf* and introduced more efficient collection systems for *zakat* and *sadaqah*. The most progressive among them have adopted development-oriented theological interpretations of *zakat* enabling wider funding of non-religious causes and the financing and implementation of a variety of development and relief programs. An illustration of the recognition of the relevance of Islamic philanthropy regionally is the awarding of the *Ramon Magsaysay Award* – viewed as the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize – to the first and largest professional Islamic philanthropic organization in Indonesia, *Dompot Dhuafa* (DD), in 2016 for its contribution to addressing social problems since its establishment in 1993 (see Fauzia as well as Latief, this issue).

The substantial resources of this wide range of faith-based charitable and philanthropic organizations typically do not come from institutional grants. Unlike in the U.S., in Southeast Asia family and corporate foundations, even when motivated by religious convictions, do not prioritize funding to religious causes. Among the exceptions are the *Buddharaksa Foundation* of the Chearavanont family and the related DT Group in Thailand, which has an explicit focus on religion and funds Buddhist schools, monasteries, and nunneries (Thai Giving, 2017), and the *Nanang Felicidad T. Sy Foundation*, related to the SM Group, which is directed at endorsing Catholicism. Generally, however, religious institutions are critically dependent on cash and in-kind donations from individuals and families, and only secondarily count on income-generating assets and, increasingly, payments from social services. To give some indications of the sums involved: The approximately 40,000 temples in Thailand receive about USD 2.83 billion annually in individual donations (see Phaholyothin, this issue). In Indonesia, DD is considered the largest philanthropic organization nationally in terms of donations, having collected in 2015 a total of voluntary contributions and *zakat* taxes equivalent to about USD 23 million (Dana *zakat* dominasi, 2017). In the same year, the overall total of *zakat* collection by entitled semi-public and private institutions reached almost USD 3 billion and

the annual potential amount is estimated to be hundreds of times higher (General Directorate of Taxation, 2016).

This reflects people's inclination to give to religious institutions, when they donate to organizations rather than to individuals in their community as is commonly the case. In the Philippines of the 86% of households that donated to organizations in the period 1999-2000, 73% gave to churches and 29% to social services, with a minimal percentage going to, in decreasing order, culture and recreation groups; education and research; local neighbourhood groups; health groups; and development and housing. Most of the recipients focused on the surrounding communities, while less than 10% of households gave to advocacy and NGOs with broader mandates. As the study concludes, people prefer to give to those that address local concerns, while "organizations that go beyond the purely local and towards more abstract and policy type issues tend to attract less individual giving" (Fernan, 2002, p.2). Likewise, in Indonesia, a 2006 study of Islamic philanthropy by the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University found that while 94% of the Muslim population gave to religious institutions, only 11% donated to environmental groups, 11% to women's organization, and 3% to human rights organizations (see Fauzia, this issue). A 2012 survey of giving in five provinces across Thailand⁷ found that temples are the most frequent beneficiaries of giving to organizations (93%), followed by educational institutions (83%), hospitals and health organizations (74%), community organizations (65%) and royal-affiliated projects (49%). The same survey also found that temples are perceived as the most trustworthy and effective charitable organizations, followed by royal-affiliated projects (Assumption University in Chhina., Petersik, Loh, & Evans, 2014, p. 92).

Even if widely trusted by the public, religious organizations do not always have transparent financial and management systems, and there have been highly publicized occurrences of corruption and mismanagement such as the mega-church scandal in Singapore, or the USD 20 million temple embezzlement case in Thailand (Farley, 2017; Lesley, 2015). Like corporate and family foundations, religious organizations tend to provide only scant information to the public on the funds involved and even less on their use and impacts. There are worries, also at the government level, that accumulated resources are not always promptly disbursed and assets remain unproductive.

Concerns have also been raised on the sectarian inclination of religious institutions. While many do work for the broader society, there is a tendency to employ resources to advance the congregation's well-being, or to proselytize. Christian groups have a long tradition of promoting their faith through educational and health activities (Goh, 2005). In Thailand, temple assistance mainly concerns the Buddhist community, and mosques' resources focus on Muslim communities (Prapertchob, 1991). For Malaysia, Cogswell (2002) notes that despite legal requirements and official statements that stress inclusive philanthropy, most charity and philanthropic institutions, and especially religious ones, are organized according to the ethnic and religious lines of Buddhist-Chinese, Muslim-Malays and Hindu-Indians with giving mostly directed to "the religious or cultural preservation of the ethnic group of the donor" (Cogswell, 2002, p. 107).

7 The survey locations were Greater Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Chonburi, and Songkla.

In recent times, fears have also surfaced about the rise of fundamentalism in the region and the financial support channelled by international (as well as national) faith-based donors. After 9/11, the focus has mainly been on Islamic humanitarian organizations and on trying to differentiate those that may use aid to finance Islamist groups from those that seek to alleviate suffering and foster economic development (Ibrahim, 2014). Some attention is also given to trans-border connections among extremist Buddhist movements and foundations in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand (Arora, 2014). In Singapore and the Philippines, links of conservative local Christian groups with those in the US and the external funding of mega churches and evangelization efforts have been questioned. Donations also flow the other way around; for instance, in Indonesia there are often fund-raising campaigns for humanitarian issues that have been politicized by radical groups such as the persecution of the Rohingya community in Myanmar and the Palestine cause.

A more general point of debate concerning religious organizations in Southeast Asia as in other parts of the world is whether they engage in charity or philanthropy. Indeed, much of their work is ad hoc and focused mainly on religious activities and otherwise on alleviating the suffering of the poor, orphans, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups. Although many also contribute to more sustainable community development, including education, health, and welfare, it can be generalized that for religious communities, like their corporate counterparts, structural change is rarely part of their agenda.

CONCLUSION

In a region undergoing rapid and unequal economic growth, accumulated wealth is increasingly being used to ameliorate the underprivileged conditions of those lagging behind. In spite of the uncertain fiscal and legal environment, home-grown philanthropy is flourishing compounded by cultural traditions, religious aspirations, and corporate interests. Institutionalized giving is predominantly organized in family and corporate initiatives, semi-autonomous foundations funded by government sources, and faith-based institutions. An assessment of the extent of their overall contribution to Southeast Asia's development is challenged by the lack of detailed information on the available financial resources and how they are used. There is sufficient evidence, however, to conclude that their contribution is valuable in enhancing the welfare of individuals and families through the provision of social services and education and for the relief of immediate suffering.

Other sectors receive less attention; in particular, philanthropic and charitable funding shows scant appreciation for the importance of the arts and humanities and the 'soft' sides of development for society. With the enthusiastic adoption of venture philanthropy in Southeast Asia and further blurring of philanthropy and business, this lack can be expected to remain if not expand in the years to come. Given the authoritarian trend in the region, home-grown philanthropy also seems to deny a place to human rights advocacy and the pursuit of structural change. Religious giving caught in between charity and philanthropy is generally not geared towards transformative processes and often does not propose an inclusive approach. Sectarian and extremist trends in all faith denominations deserve further research to better

understand their implications. Albeit for different reasons, the currently validated models of CSR, social entrepreneurship, and social impact investment, by their very nature, do not appear promising for a social justice agenda.

In the past, international foundations provided support to more critical causes, but with a decline in foreign aid and a paradigm shift toward a more technocratic and business approach to philanthropy, the level of funding from such sources has dropped and can be expected to decline further. As I argue in another paper (Sciortino, 2016), this does not imply that humanistic and social justice approaches are no longer relevant. On the contrary, with the acceleration of regional economic integration and the strengthening of fundamentalist and nationalist discourses, questions of equitable and inclusive development are more pressing than ever. This article thus leaves unresolved how efforts to address these questions can be resourced and how can concerned civil society groups find alternative sources of funding to remain vibrant. Experiments are underway to broaden the donor base with crowd-funding and electronic platforms, but it is too early to judge their value for advocacy and human rights NGOs.

This article also brings us to reflect on whether giving that focuses on profit and corporate branding – without aiming at bringing about structural change – should be seen as just another form of doing possibly more accountable business, rather than philanthropy. This all suggests that moving past the rhetoric on partnership in attaining sustainable development goals will require a more emancipatory brand of Southeast Asian philanthropy. At the moment, however, that looks more like wishful thinking.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Margot Cohen, Patrick McCormick, and Alan Feinstein for their comments and editorial assistance.

Legacies of Cultural Philanthropy in Asia

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► Zurbuchen, M. S. (2017). Legacies of cultural philanthropy in Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 165-184.

During the second half of the 20th century the Ford Foundation – at the time the world’s largest private philanthropy – made a significant commitment to issues of cultural heritage as part of its international work in Asia. Across countries in South and Southeast Asia, in particular, foundation grants were made to governments, private institutions, and individuals engaged in a wide range of fields in the arts, humanities, and applied sciences such as archaeology. The Foundation’s culture programs embraced *tangible heritage* as well as a range of *living traditions* and *cultural expression*. Such rubrics served as important labels locating culture within the broad portfolio of the Foundation’s grant-making, as well as touchstones employed to justify philanthropy’s attention to culture in contrast to the dominant emphasis of international aid on economic development and modernization. This paper will look at how one of the world’s most important international philanthropies built a rationale for activism in cultural fields in Asia, how a decentralized format for local decision-making enabled sustained support for building capacity and knowledge in the arts and humanities, and, ultimately, how the ‘culture lens’ has gradually been displaced – or perhaps redefined – in the Foundation’s current international work.

Keywords: Art; Asia; Culture; Ford Foundation; Philanthropy



INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that American philanthropy, including activities in developing countries, is experiencing fundamental shifts. Philanthropy – often understood as using private wealth for public good – has been practiced in the United States for more than a century within a particular framework shaped by American laws, which made it possible for philanthropists to minimize their tax burden by giving away wealth for what are defined as ‘charitable purposes’.

Primarily as a result of new technologies created by large and successful corporations, there is now a group of tremendously wealthy entrepreneurs and investors seeking to redefine the purposes and methods of philanthropic practice. Often called “philanthrocapitalists” (Edwards, 2008; Wilby, 2010), these entrepreneurs assert that being successful in business gives them the know-how to solve large-scale problems of poverty and deprivation. Their philanthropic organizations promote “business-like ways of working, business-like efficiency, and market-driven solutions to social problems” (Feinstein, 2011, p. 88). Instead of the ‘bottom line’ of corporate profit, they promise a ‘bottom line’ of social impact. Along with bottom-line thinking comes an emphasis on measuring

outcomes and tangible results. The language of metrics, benchmarks, risk-reward ratios, and scaling up now pervades the discourse of new philanthropies, making staff and their boards even more eager to see results quickly.

In his new book David Callahan scrutinizes major living donors, who he argues are forming a “heterogeneous new power elite” (Callahan, 2017, p. 8). He describes activist mega donors who want to be celebrated for carrying out their philanthropic mission and who maintain close personal control over their foundations, noting how in many cases donors are determined to give away all their wealth for specific purposes during their lifetimes, rather than leaving behind foundations that could evolve and chart new directions in perpetuity. The proponents of what is nowadays termed “venture philanthropy” (Frumkin, 2003) do appear more activist than earlier generations of foundation executives. Venture philanthropists craft social media messages to explain their goals, and have created a celebrity culture of giving away wealth. Like the rock star Bono, they want to personalize their giving, and to be seen among African villagers or Indian slum dwellers directly carrying out their philanthropic mission. The people changing philanthropy paradigms today using vast personal wealth come from all political backgrounds, including progressives such as George Soros and the ultra-conservative Koch brothers. When the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, and his wife, Priscilla Chan, recently announced the creation of a limited liability company for “advancing human potential and promoting equality” and pledged to give away 99% of their Facebook shares, public reaction to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative was mixed (Soskis, 2015). Would this be a breathtaking example of private largess addressing major world problems, or another instance of a mega-philanthropy promising to cure social ills while promoting its own business brand?

Undoubtedly, philanthropy has grown, both in total assets and numbers of private foundations. According to the Foundation Center’s database, in 2014 the United States had more than 86,700 grant making foundations, with total assets of over USD 865 billion. Some 30,000 new private foundations were created since 2000. U.S. Foundations made more than USD 60 billion in grants in 2014, both within the U.S. and abroad (Foundation Center, 2017). Increased public attention is drawn to new philanthropists pledging to ‘change the world’. The tech entrepreneurs shaping new philanthropy “believe their charitable giving is bolder, bigger and more data-driven than anywhere else” (Stanley, 2015). Yet as some critics have argued, we need to challenge venture philanthropy’s assumption that business logic is the same as the logic underlying complex social processes.¹ We might ask whether an emphasis on short-term results is leaving out more open-ended kinds of grant making that train community organizers, build institutions, or take risks through new kinds of social change experiments. We could consider whether an overarching concern with the bottom line and metrics “can drive grant making out of types of work whose results can be difficult to gauge, such as leadership development, work on race relations, [and] human rights education” (Berresford, 1999). In addition, we need to examine the notion that the most important philanthropy resonates with the urgency of today’s media headlines.

1 See Edwards (2008) on the limits of philanthrocapitalism’s promise to produce far-reaching change.

Outside the United States, the manner in which concentrated wealth is employed in top-down ways in development projects – often determining local non-profit agendas and skewing public policy priorities – needs to be more carefully analyzed (Massing, 2016). It is not that concern for persistent poverty or disease in the world is misplaced. The problem is that promoting solutions that are designed in foundation headquarters to be implemented in distant communities, or that are expressed in terms of precise technical inputs to be measured, removes the need to “consider the cultural, humanistic, and political sides of the equation” (Anft, 2015).

This paper considers whether culture itself is important, especially in non-Western contexts, as the ‘new philanthropy’ paradigm becomes dominant. At first glance, the prospects do not look promising. The philanthrocapitalist’s emphasis on technical solutions and measurable results is not especially compatible with intangible subjects like the vitality of oral traditions, or for example the ways an ethnographic museum can build appreciation for a society’s ethnic diversity. A tech entrepreneur may look at a multitude of world languages to be learned and taught and imagine inventing a universal translation tool, instead of less cutting edge approaches – such as endowing under-funded language departments of public universities. And in a world rife with injustice and inequalities, private philanthropy and governments alike tend to see cultural pursuits – including disciplines in the arts and humanities – as secondary priorities, if they count at all.

My aim here is to reflect on the record and the motivations of a leading global private foundation that for decades was active in cultural philanthropy across Asia. I will review the overall trajectory of the Ford Foundation’s culture-focused philanthropy in its offices in South and Southeast Asia from the late 1970s into the 21st century. Tracing the various rationales underlying cultural grants leads us to a more complete view of the paradigms of engagement Ford employed in ‘developing’ countries. It also reveals clear distinctions between field office grants and Ford’s domestic arts agenda, as well as intersections between cultural programs and other Foundation priorities. Given both notable changes in the field of philanthropy in recent years, as well as changes in Ford’s emphases and ways of working, it is important to ask whether arts and culture are still relevant to its priorities, and what turns cultural grant making in Asia has taken.

EARLY SUPPORT FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

First, we must evoke the background of an institution that for many years was the world’s wealthiest foundation, once described as “a large body of money completely surrounded by people who want some” (Macdonald, 1989, p. 3). Today, when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation looms over the philanthropic landscape with assets of more than USD 60 billion, one forgets a time when it was Ford that regularly made major headlines in American discussions of private foundations. This prominence began in around 1950, when the Foundation was endowed with 90% of the stock of the Ford Motor Company.² By 1960 it had a corpus of over USD 3 billion, along

² Eventually the Foundation divested from its Ford Motor Co. holdings, and the Ford family disassociated itself from the expanded global foundation.

with an annual budget much larger than that of the United Nations and its specialized agencies combined.³ Within the legal environment for American philanthropy, it is important to note that during this period the more valuable the Ford Motor Company became, the more the Foundation's dividends increased, making it necessary to increase its grant making in order to preserve its tax-exempt status.⁴

Yet it was not the sheer scale of its resources that commanded attention when, in 1949, the Foundation announced its intention to address issues of global importance such as peace, democracy, and human welfare – it was the startling breadth and loftiness of its vision. From its beginnings in the 1930s as a small local family foundation that had supported the communities of auto factory workers around Dearborn, Michigan, Ford set out to become a major presence on the national and international stage. The founding text for its expanded mandate was a weighty document called the Gaither Report, which came out of a process involving multiple task forces and more than 1000 people charged to consider “the ways in which the Ford Foundation can most effectively and intelligently put its resources to work for human welfare” (Gaither, 1950, p. 13). The Gaither Report provided the conceptual scaffolding for the international edifice Ford would build through its network of overseas field offices, a key part of its expansive mission to solve the world's problems. And this brings us to New Delhi, Yangon (Rangoon), and Jakarta, where the first field offices in Asia were launched.

Let us imagine a scene in Burma in 1953, not long after the Ford Foundation opened a field office in Rangoon as part of an expanding presence in Asia. Departing from its pattern of funding projects in public administration and agriculture, the Foundation decided to support a request from the Burmese Government for the creation of an International Institute of Advanced Buddhist Studies, which would foster activities in Pāli scholarship and organize the Sixth Great Buddhist Council. The Council was to convene for two years between the full moons of May 1954 and 1956, gathering 15,000 Buddhist monks and scholars from all over Asia. According to its proponents, the Institute was “expected to become the spiritual center of Southeast Asia, radiating ... irresistible and overpowering rays of Wisdom, Truth, and Righteousness” (Macdonald, 1989, pp. 66-69).⁵

This intriguing gesture to Burma's heritage was just the first in a record of grants supporting cultural heritage in numerous Asian countries for more than 50 years. Cultural interests first emerged for Ford in a systematic way in India, where its first overseas office had opened in New Delhi in 1952. In 1955, for example, the Foundation established the Southern Languages Book Trust to publish great works of literature and philosophy in the four major languages of South India. The following year, the Foundation purchased from the Museum of Modern Art in New York a thousand copies

3 At the end of 2014, the Foundation had USD 14.4 billion in assets; it gave away some USD 518 million during that year.

4 The United States Congress established rules for foundations, including the requirement to use a certain percentage of their assets annually for what are defined as ‘charitable activities’.

5 See Macdonald (1989, pp. 66-69) for more details on Foundation grant 05400155. Its budget of that time of USD 327,000 would be the equivalent of USD 2.9 million in 2015 – an extraordinary amount for an initial commitment even today, and evidence of the Foundation's relative wealth. At this early point, Ford's annual grant budget was about four times as large as that of second biggest U.S. foundation (Rockefeller Foundation).

of books and multiple film prints, products of an exhibition MOMA had organized on Indian handloom textiles and crafts (Gandhi, 2002, p. 4). While the ostensible aim of this grant was to reintroduce ‘principles of good design’ to Indian cottage industry, it also clearly acknowledged the immense creative wealth of India’s artisan communities.

I cite these examples of early cultural grants to note how the Ford Foundation’s stance within the post-colonial Asian dynamic of continuity and change included an inclination toward the arts and humanities. The Gaither Report lauded the importance of scientific investigation and “professional experts generating objective knowledge” (Francis X. Sutton, in Macdonald, 1989, p. xv)⁶ and for some years the Foundation was guided by this ‘heady prospectus’ in setting its priorities. Arts and culture were not among those priorities initially, but thinking changed and with its resources growing rapidly – thus making it a necessity to disperse many more dollars each year – in 1957 the Foundation looked seriously at the needs of American creative artists and the potential for providing support to projects of ‘national significance’. The Arts and Culture program launched in the United States in 1962 aimed to raise the arts to new levels of achievement and fiscal stability through long-term support to a group of promising institutions. The enormous impact of the USD 400 million spent in the 1980s can still be seen in the worlds of dance, regional theater, symphony orchestras, and arts management throughout the United States. Ford’s support for the arts both stimulated U.S. private and corporate gifts to arts institutions and influenced the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. The creative force behind this landmark initiative was W. McNeil Lowry, who saw the arts and humanities as an important counterbalance to the Foundation’s focus on social sciences and research.

Cultural programming emerged very differently in the Asian settings where Ford worked. Field offices produced culture grants in a decentralized way, depending on local contexts, inclinations of Foundation staff, and direct encouragement from country directors, called Representatives. The 1950s and 60s were years when issues of nation-building and economic development dominated international relations and Western states were fixated on the ideological competition with Soviet and Chinese communist spheres.⁷ In India, with its flagship field office, Ford worked with the government to find ways to improve rural life. In response to the invitation of Prime Minister Nehru, the Foundation supported modernization and reorganization of village industries, which led to increased attention to traditional handloom and handicraft producers, thus raising the possibility of culture as a focus for development efforts. The Foundation helped start the National Institute of Design in 1961, urging “the cooperation of ethnologists, art historians, and village teachers with a feeling for the true cultural past” (Gandhi, 2002, p. 5).

6 Macdonald (1989) labels the Gaither Report’s language “foundationese”, as in the following: “The problems of mankind must be solved, if they are to be solved at all, by a combined use of all those types of knowledge by which human affairs may be influenced” (p. 139).

7 The Foundation’s initial cultural efforts were focused mainly in Europe, reflecting the conviction that exchange of ideas and cultural achievements could help promote peace in the wake of World War II’s “devastating effect on the European intellectual community ... American observers feared that Marxism and Communism would exert a growing appeal among these disaffected intellectuals...” (McCarthy, 1987, p. 94). The Foundation’s first President, Paul Hoffman, had served as administrator of the Marshall Program in Europe, and firmly believed in nongovernmental cultural diplomacy.

At the same time, efforts in language development and publishing such as the Southern Languages Book Trust, along with bilingual education and English language training, reflected the importance of India's multilingual and multicultural environment. The Trust also reflected the geopolitics of the Cold War,⁸ as the Soviet Union was supporting a steady stream of cheap books in Indian vernaculars at the time. In newly independent Burma, competing East/West ideologies, along with the need to unite an ethnically diverse people, were clear factors in the creation of the International Institute for Advanced Buddhist Studies mentioned above. The suggestion that Ford Foundation might support the Institute – which was called the Pāli Project – was made in writing by a U.S. aid mission official, who cited Premier U Nu's opinion that “the popular belief that Americans work solely for the benefit of themselves or others is one of the strongest weapons in the hands of Communist propagandists in Southeast Asia” (Macdonald, 1989, p. 67).

The rationale that intergroup unity and democratic values would greatly assist the nation-building process became linked to concern for culture, as reflected in Ford Foundation program guidelines for the 1960s:

The successful development of new nations includes, and in part depends on, cultural and intellectual factors. New nations seek to ‘discover’ their own cultures, and to achieve greater clarity concerning their national purposes...it is proposed that Overseas Development support carefully selected projects designed to further these less tangible but important purposes of developing nations. (Ford Foundation, 1960s)

An equally significant justification for Foundation involvement with India's culture was articulated in the mid-1960s by a Ford consultant, Arthur Isenberg, who argued that India's classical past and its ‘folk culture’ were threatened by urbanization and rapid change. By this time the Rangoon field office had closed, as the Foundation was ordered to leave Burma after the military takeover of 1962. In 1969 a small grant for heritage preservation created an opening for new programming; this was reinforced by positive signals from the Foundation's Trustees.⁹ A contraction in Foundation assets through the 1970s (due to a broad U.S. economic downturn) meant “the Foundation's enthusiastic conversion to the idea of conserving India's cultural past had to be curbed” (Gandhi, 2002, p. 10). By 1978, however, the Foundation approved a comprehensive program centered on preservation for India. This program would grow and evolve, sparking grants in India and other Asia offices for more than two decades.

8 Much has been made of the degree to which Ford and other private foundations were linked to the Cold War policies of the U.S. government, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, through entities such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The debate over these activities is peripheral to this essay, but relevant discussion can be found in Saunders (2000), Epstein (1967), McCarthy (1987), and a variety of other sources. Coming from another direction, the Foundation was also targeted as “leftist” in the press for its work on civil liberties and racial discrimination, which led to a series of congressional investigations in the 1950s and 1960s (Macdonald, 1989, pp. 27-35; Rosenfield, 2015, pp. 7, 23). And when Henry Ford II resigned from the Board of Trustees in 1976, severing the last Ford family ties with the Foundation, he criticized the organization “for attacking the capitalist economic system that had created it” (Rosenfield, 2015, p. 24).

9 Chairman of the board Alexander Heard wrote in 1970 that “to interpret and make visible the cultural heritage of many a developing nation ought to contribute to a sense of national pride and to the much discussed sense of identity that everyone seems to want these days” (Zurbuchen, 1994, p.15).

Key Programming Themes

The geography and modality of the Foundation's support for arts and humanities in Asia looks different from one vantage point to another. At various times the Foundation made grants in the arts and humanities in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The history of this support is highly variable, with no fixed template determining which kinds of grants should be approved. There were scant policy guidelines for officers interested in working on cultural topics, and no specific annual budget allocation for such grants. On occasion, grants were conceived opportunistically without a longer-term strategic framework. Some culture programs were sparsely staffed, with field offices often relying on part-timers or consultants for this work. Officers whose actual assignments were in other fields such as education, social sciences, or human rights might have managed culture grants. Those staff members frequently responded in a more or less ad hoc way to opportunities to support cultural activities within the constraints of time and budgets imposed by their primary program responsibilities. In the following discussion, I will focus on the larger, sustained programs in arts and culture in countries where officers were assigned to develop clearly articulated visions. Those offices are New Delhi (which made grants in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and Indonesia (which also managed activities in Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam, at different periods).

It is vexingly hard to be precise in tracking how much the Foundation spent on culture outside of the United States, because the structure of Ford's program division and its accounting codes changed over the years. For the most part, culture programs in Asia fell under larger categories such as *Education, Media, Arts and Culture*, and received small slices of annual field office budgets. Between 1984 and 1994, for example, the largest expenditures in all overseas offices went to grants under the categories of Rural Poverty and Resources, International Affairs, and Education. During this same period, *Cultural Preservation and Interpretation* accounted for about 13% of all grant dollars in India, and 18% in Indonesia (Zurbuchen, 1994, appendix tables 2 and 4). These amounts were probably the highest among all overseas offices, since culture grants tended to be fewer in Ford's Latin America and Africa offices. Budgets for culture never approached the scale of arts expenditures in the U.S. program. In the 1984-1994 period, culture-related grants in Asia totaled roughly USD 21.5 million dollars, a mere 8% of total Asia grant expenditures. In general, it seems that field office representatives could feel confident in recommending annual culture program budgets as long as these remained subsidiaries to their major 'developing country' agenda. Addressing poverty, illness, and injustice would claim the major portion of field office resources even as robust cultural programs grew.

Taking a closer look at how country programs responded to opportunities to engage with culture, we turn to sites receiving the largest commitment to the arts and humanities in Asia: India, Indonesia and (on a smaller scale) Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam. While the specifics of each field office's grants differed widely, several key themes stand out across the region and over nearly thirty years.

Heritage Conservation

The Foundation initially addressed cultural issues as a matter of material heritage – the *cultural property* that manifests history and identity in tangible form. National governments were often open to outside technical assistance for preservation of monuments, archaeological sites, and movable property such as ethnographic collections or hand-written documents. Thus, the India office worked with institutions such as the Archaeological Survey of India, Deccan College in Pune, the New Delhi School of Architecture, the cities of Jaipur and Ahmedabad, and public and private manuscript collections to support training, research, and improved technologies in the fields of archaeology, urban conservation planning, and manuscript documentation. Similar grants for archaeological training and research were made in Sri Lanka, and Bhutan's National Museum received assistance in managing national art and manuscript collections. In Indonesia, conservation of monuments, advanced training for archaeologists and museologists, and manuscript preservation for endangered collections in the palaces of Central Java and the National Library were all supported. In Thailand, Foundation funds helped launch an important program to conserve the wealth of mural paintings in Buddhist temples, in partnership with the government's Fine Arts Department.

All this heritage work opened up deeper challenges and questions about the validity of culture grant making. Identifying heritage conservation as a goal is hardly helpful, one Foundation staffer observed, in deciding *what* to preserve. Material remains of the past can be appropriated by power centers to legitimize dominant ideologies, as when India's Babri Masjid was claimed as a Hindu site, or when archaeological evidence of ancient Tamil settlement in Sri Lanka conflicted with the politics of national history. The conservation of the past might sharpen conflicts when, say, excavation activity threatens local settlement or livelihoods. Involvement of a foreign institution with cultural property can aggravate local or nationalistic sensitivities. And even when a project is successful – such as the microfilm documentation of thousands of pages of frail manuscripts – there remain questions of public or scholarly interest, interpretation, and survival of that written heritage in its new format.

Still, the record of Ford's cultural grants produced many compelling arguments for attention to material heritage. Learning from history and appreciating links with the past tend to be viewed as significant in most societies – a reality that needs recognition in wealthier countries where the existence of archives, libraries, museums, and other cultural resources is often taken for granted. On the local level, culture grants drew attention and appreciation from government and private institutions. By means of its sustained culture program the Foundation earned credibility among governments, artists, and scholars for supporting activities other major donors would not consider. On the international level, Ford's attention to cultural heritage reinforced the major investments it was making in the 1960s and 1970s to build international and area studies in U.S. universities. As Benedict Anderson notes, post-WW II U.S. government agencies put priority on expanding much-needed international scholarship, “but very large private institutions, especially the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, also played an important role, partly offsetting the ‘policy’ focus of the state. Senior officials in these foundations ... were more liberal in their outlook than state functionaries, and somewhat less obsessed with combating ‘world communism’” (Anderson, 2016, p. 34).

In some measure, then, the Foundation's contributions to capacity-building in archaeology, museology, and conservation sciences resulted in benefits for Asian institutions and communities who would, it was argued by foundation officers, be better able to interpret and utilize the past for the common good.

Cultural Transmission

It is not very far from conservation of tangible heritage, of course, to the intangible dimensions of culture. Core issues here involve change and vitality of cultural forms over time, and processes through which meaning is conveyed to audiences and across generations within the larger social, environmental, and religious settings of particular groups. The passing of skills and practice from older to younger, the dissemination of art forms to new audiences, and the formation of new relations between patrons, practitioners, and consumers are all part of the 'transmission' idea.

Living traditions are always in a state of change; tradition is neither fixed nor static. As the Foundation saw it by the 1980s, many arts genres in Asia faced qualitative changes of such magnitude that their survival was threatened.¹⁰ Minority groups under the hegemony of strong national centers and with new languages and educational systems to master found their inherited arts ignored, undervalued or otherwise marginalized. Changes in how an art form is transmitted, for instance from oral to written media, or in relations between artists and traditional sources of patronage, disrupt continuity. Formal education, the politics of language, and modern media all have profound effects on cultural transmission.

The Foundation put considerable effort into assisting arts practitioners to sustain and convey older forms of expression. In India, funds helped classical musicians and dance masters document their traditions and adapt older systems of pedagogy to new social and economic conditions. Folk culture studies became a major program for the New Delhi office, with goals of strengthening field research as well as the role of expressive arts in social development and communications. In Indonesia, meanwhile, cultural transmission required paying attention to ethnic diversity, oral traditions and performance genres across a large archipelago where heavy-handed bureaucracies were seeking to 'guide' and 'improve' local religious and cultural expression. Indonesian arts were also being disrupted by adaptation to modern education, as masters of performance traditions were increasingly expected to become credentialed instructors in the government's conservatories and arts academies.

While in India folk culture studies provided a strong interdisciplinary focus for traditional arts, in Indonesia the field of world music or ethnomusicology became a key organizing principle, embracing both arts of the traditional aristocracy as well as diverse village-based performance genres. Foundation staff worked with arts academies and field researchers as they developed new humanities curricula and practitioner networks. Independent national organizations such as the Society for Indonesian Performing Arts and the Oral Traditions Association took shape. In the Philippines, Ford supported ethnomusicology in the academy and archiving of

10 One document attributed the threats to a "rush toward economic growth and social modernization" and "changes in public values", suggesting "the task, then, is to help national elites be more comfortable with their own pasts" (Ford Foundation, 1978, p. 20).

field recording collections developed by José Maceda of the Philippines, whose pioneering research illustrated commonalities among performance genres throughout Southeast Asia.

One conceptual challenge in arts grant making involves finding a balance between scholarly and activist approaches. It was important to move beyond the academic atmosphere of arts institutes to direct engagement with living traditions in the communities that keep them vital. Thus, in Thailand a unique oral history project gathered stories of life and culture from displaced Khmer refugees in camps along the border. In Indonesia in the 1990s, Ford sponsored a major recording project involving the Smithsonian Institution and the Society for Indonesian Performing Arts, which over ten years documented musical styles in 23 provinces, resulting in a landmark 20-CD series with the Folkways Records label.¹¹ In Vietnam, support went for a competition providing small grants to community-based arts groups to record, document or research their own arts, generating materials on ritual, crafts, performing arts, and languages among 30 ethnic minority communities across 39 provinces.¹²

Foundation culture programs also tried to take account of interlinked processes of economic and social change, and of the impact of contemporary media and communications revolutions. Issues of cultural transmission involve not only changes in the arts but also the survival of entire ways of life. As struggles over control of forest land intensified across Southeast Asia, community resource use patterns, material culture, and local identities all became threatened by larger political and economic forces. Culture programs thus intersected with the Foundation's concerns to reduce poverty and address issues to do with rights and governance.

Creative Expression

Over time, the emphasis of Ford's culture grants in Asia shifted from 'cultural preservation and interpretation' – one of the frequent categories found in the documents – to include concerns for vitality and diversity. Program officers were interested in encouraging innovative, experimental, critical work in a variety of media. They felt an emphasis on creative expression would help incorporate the experiences of underrepresented groups into national life; support the emergence of new idioms in traditional arts; develop stronger capacities, new audiences, and channels for cultural expression; and, clarify the links between contemporary expression and its context, including traditional forms. What are the multiple stances toward modernity and tradition that artists attempt? What is the role of the artist in a post-traditional, heavily state-controlled environment? Would improving the infrastructure for arts organizations result in better conditions for creative work?

Field offices supported creativity in varied ways. In India, a theater laboratory project supported contemporary theater directors in experimental work drawing on local and folk genres, and also helped promising theater groups to develop new methodologies and share innovations. Indonesian arts and literary groups organized

11 The *Music of Indonesia* project is described in detail in Ford Foundation (2003, p. 194).

12 The *Folk Arts and Culture Fund* — administered by the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam — has supported some 170 local projects to date (Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh, personal communication, 09 March 2016).

national celebrations of local arts, oral tradition, and regional languages. The Hanoi office provided training abroad for young Vietnamese filmmakers and helped them showcase their productions, while a new supporting organization was created in Indonesia to help arts organizations in management, strategic planning, and funding strategies. Both offices in India and Indonesia provided resources for exploring the outreach and public service potential of broadcast media, including community radio and the expanding television spectrum. The explosive growth of digital media and the Internet in the first years of the 21st century prompted grants for studying new media access, analysis of emerging creative and copyright issues and innovations in documentary film.

Again, principles of selection were an issue. The Foundation did not stipulate global policies to help in the choice of which artistic or expressive field to encourage. Program staff needed to consult widely to understand the conditions that support, limit, and channel creativity within a particular field. They looked to expression of local needs, selecting points of entry through cooperation with consultants and expert committees, and through stimulation of dialogues among key actors in a particular field.

Culture and Identities

In the 1950s and 60s, important changes were taking hold in post-colonial Asian states, and the consolidation of national identities was a ubiquitous project. The ‘unity in diversity’ motto was heard in calls for integration and assimilation, both political and cultural. National unity was inscribed on material heritage, too, as historic sites and artifacts were seen as defining a people’s shared identity. If that identity was strong, it was argued, people could be resilient in the face of the manifold pressures of modernization. Even in Thailand, which had escaped direct European colonization, destabilization brought by conflicts in Indochina meant that “Thai cultural identity was ... subject to severe pressures of an accelerated westernization and modernization process” (Klausner, 1991). A surge of thefts of valuable images from Buddhist temples, and the embarrassing disappearance of hundreds of objects from the collection of the National Museum, prompted leaders of cultural institutions to look for ways of “inculcating in the Thai public a sense of pride in their rich cultural heritage” (W. Klausner, personal communication, 24 February 2016). The Foundation’s support for research and training in both archaeology and mural painting conservation emerged in part from such locally-expressed concerns, which included anxiety over the impact of a large American military presence on Thailand’s social norms.

Of course, even when nation-building ideologies were dominant, and as Cold War-related conflicts led to Vietnam’s American War and the Indonesian annexation of East Timor, counter-narratives to the national unity theme have been regularly voiced. In the last years of the twentieth century most areas of Ford’s work, including governance, livelihoods, and human rights, became linked in one way or another to the acceptance and expression of distinct identities within the national fabric. Working with the cultural sector in Vietnam, for example, a portfolio of grants expanded effective arts management, to “create space for artists to reflect on issues of identity in the context of rapid socio-economic change” (Stern, 2003, p. 42).

Emphasizing diversity¹³ through cultural grants both underscored and contributed to each of the other program themes in field office settings. There is resonance between India's folk culture institutions and advocates working for rights of the *dalit* and tribal groups of the country. Local artists recording oral epics in uplands Vietnam raise the profile of minority ethnic communities whose access to forest land is being undermined by national policy. A research project on traditional arts and the Islamic heritage of Java can address a growing rhetoric of discrimination and exclusion that would seek to suppress the performing arts on grounds of religious orthodoxy.

SHAPING A COMMITMENT

There were, of course, other actors in the culture field in Asia during the years I am discussing here. Most of these were bilateral or multilateral agencies representing a government, as with Germany's Goethe Institute, or groups of governments, like UNESCO, which has long promoted heritage sites of global importance and whose *Intangible Cultural Heritage program* was defined in its 2003 convention. Embassies – including those of former colonizers – benefit from the 'soft diplomacy' of sponsoring a museum exhibition or donating to a restoration project. Nonetheless, among U.S. private charitable groups it is rare for foundations to take more than sporadic interest in international cultural matters.¹⁴ For most of its history, for example, the Rockefeller Foundation focused on medicine and agriculture in its developing country philanthropy.¹⁵ Organizations that focus on tangible heritage include the J. Paul Getty Trust, which is most active in Europe and the Mediterranean. However, Getty is an operating foundation, meaning that it implements its own projects, in contrast to a grant making foundation like Ford, which funds independent groups. Japanese foundations have been active in sponsoring cultural projects in Southeast Asian countries, but this interest has been relatively recent and primarily involves academic research and collaborations (the Japan and Nippon Foundations are good examples), or restoration of particular historic sites or shrines (as some East Asian trusts have done in Hoi An, the historic trade port of central Vietnam). The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, based in Geneva, works across the Muslim world (including Malaysia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) on conservation of historic cities, musical heritage, and architecture and urban design.

Still, it is clear that Ford's role in support of a wide range of cultural activities was for decades unique among donors working in Asia. By the late 1990s, professional staff with assignments in what was by then called Education, Media, Arts and Culture (EMAC) were located in Jakarta, Hanoi, New Delhi, and Beijing; together with new

13 It is notable that the Foundation took diversity seriously both internally and in grant making. Through the 1980s and 1990s, both Presidents Franklin Thomas and Susan Berresford stressed that racial and gender representation were important for the composition of the Board of Trustees as well as in staffing.

14 Important exceptions here are the Henry R. Luce Foundation and a Rockefeller offshoot, the Asian Cultural Council; both are based in New York and are much smaller philanthropies than Ford. While ACC has had small offices in East Asia, its grants primarily support individual artists from the U.S. or Asia. The Luce Foundation's emphasis is to strengthen knowledge of Asia among Americans and it has no field offices.

15 From 2001-2007, Rockefeller's innovative program in the Greater Mekong Subregion recognized transnational cultural dynamics and included grants in arts and humanities; see Sciortino (2016).

EMAC appointments in Cairo, Lagos, Nairobi, and Moscow, Ford's global 'footprint' in culture reached a high point. A number of prominent initiatives in Asia from the early 1990s reflected this broadening commitment. Ford provided significant support for the Festival of Indonesia in 1990-91, an 18-month series of museum exhibitions, performances, film showings, conferences, folklife celebrations, and other events that provided many Americans with their first glimpse of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. At about the same time, Ford made an endowment grant to establish the India Foundation for the Arts, now one of India's leading independent foundations, with programs encouraging new forms of creativity and arts education across the country.

What factors have been critical to the longevity and sustained focus of Ford's programs? Doubtless Ford's commitment to having offices in the countries where it works was an essential condition enabling culture grant making. Philanthropy based in field offices made it possible for the Foundation to develop long-term relationships with local individuals and institutions; to work more closely with grantees on development and implementation of projects; and, to generate ground-level experience and insights important for senior management and the Foundation as a whole. Even though Asian field offices have opened and closed at different moments in line with emerging opportunities or internal policy, most of Ford's culture grants were made within field offices with a well-established local presence such as in Bangkok, New Delhi, Jakarta or Dhaka.

The Foundation's overseas offices have generally not functioned as branches of headquarters, but have typically stressed local context and settings in shaping grant programs. Ford's Representatives in Asia tended to enjoy a high level of autonomy in exploring and setting local office grant making priorities, working within the broad guidelines set every few years by the Foundation's Trustees and the biennial grant budgets allocated by New York. Grant approvals up to a certain level are delegated to local Representatives,¹⁶ who also play a key role in selecting field office professional staff. The Foundation looks for program officers with local experience and relevant language and intercultural skills to serve terms of roughly three to six years; often, staff have often been recruited from university faculty, research institutes or international non-profit groups.

In building a program of grants under a theme such as "cultural preservation, vitality and interpretation", the Foundation looked for people with humanities backgrounds who could articulate a vision linking one set of grants to others in the portfolio. Deep local knowledge and professional experience were critical to working with potential grantees in responsive, creative, and flexible ways. In turn, strategic thinking implied longer-term commitment to working with a group of grantee organizations, avoiding a random succession of unrelated grants. At the same time, staff were expected to look for special opportunities or new openings to work with talented people, young organizations, or to build new constituencies to address persistent issues.

This emphasis on long-term commitment, along with local autonomy and flexibility in identifying grantees, meant that Foundation staff could build relationships

16 As of 2000, for example, any field office grant with a budget up to USD 100,000 was approved by the Representative. This kind of delegated authority is not typical of most international philanthropy.

over time through travel to different regions of a country, through broad consultations, and through bringing together different skill sets or points of view in addressing important issues. For example, when the Bangkok office decided to help the Thai government with its mural painting conservation program, companion grants were made to the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in Rome (ICCROM), which provided important technical assistance.¹⁷ When the Jakarta office developed a program aimed at promoting appreciation of cultural diversity through private radio and television outlets, broadcasters and programmers from all over Indonesia were brought together to share ideas (Ford Foundation, 2003, p. 219). This kind of ‘convening power’ often led to important and unexpected connections in grant making, and is the kind of role Ford could play by virtue of local offices open to different kinds of people, institutions, and ideas.

Employing staff responsible for cultural grant making, the Foundation built its own capacity for awareness of local priorities, values, and issues beyond the mainstream technocratic focus on development followed by major donors. Within the field office, staff assigned to different programs often worked as a team, consulting each other and sometimes jointly developing grants. One grant in Indonesia funded environmental conservation and oral traditions research in the Kayan Mentarang tropical rainforest reserve in Kalimantan, and involved program officers working on both community resource management and cultural vitality who shared goals of strengthening the ability of forest-dwelling peoples to preserve their ways of life. The culture program officer thus served as an example of the kind of ‘engaged expertise’ that views heritage as something represented by whole communities and environments (Salemink, 2016). At the same time, Ford was cautious about claiming credit for the results of particular projects; its philosophy tended to carefully distinguish the Foundation’s profile as the *grantor* – sharing ideas and providing funds – from the *grantee*’s role in carrying out projects.

A HERITAGE WORTH SUSTAINING

Having worked as a Foundation officer during more than two decades in Asian settings, I have wondered what place cultural interests have in American philanthropy. Is there a 21st century relevance in the Ford Foundation’s perspectives on creativity, transmission, and identities discussed above? The emergence of ‘new philanthropy’, with its emphasis on business-like practice and measurable outcomes, has not been accompanied by a new wave of grant making in cultural fields. One reason arts and culture may be less compelling for philanthropy today is that studying foreign countries has suffered significant retrenchment in America’s academic realms. Over the past two decades, the multidisciplinary area studies model for learning about the world, prominent since World War II, has been discounted as orientalist and Eurocentric (Gibson-Graham, 2004). While alternative models – subaltern studies, post-modernism and cultural studies – have emerged, much social science research has turned to the study of large data sets and away from close study of cultural context. In the United States,

17 Not incidentally, through its work with Thai conservators ICCROM developed new techniques for restoration of mural painting in tropical conditions – expertise that could be used in other places and contribute to building global knowledge.

basic government funding for area and international studies has been drastically reduced. The Ford Foundation's domestic program in area studies was cut back in the 1980s, thus undermining the salience once fostered between domestic programs – promoting knowledge of the world among Americans – and international cultural grant making.

The technology revolution itself may well have helped to dim the allure of international studies. With the Internet at our fingertips and social media linking anyone anywhere, much of the world now appears accessible and 'knowable' through web surfing and cyberworld networking. Further, we have seen widespread erosion of support for the humanities in U.S. schools and universities, supplanted by a belief that only the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, math) can produce market-ready citizens with skills for the 21st century workplace.¹⁸ Arguments that "humanities enhance our culture" or transmit "the best that has been thought and said" are no longer effective, says critic Stanley Fish, arguing that university administrators have shirked their duty to aggressively defend the humanities as an essential part of what a university should be doing (Fish, 2010).

In this environment, it might well seem counter-intuitive or retrograde to promote the arts and culture as important for philanthropy. Yet the new president of the Ford Foundation seems to be keeping the arts within view, at least for domestic grant making purposes. After taking the helm in 2013, Darren Walker announced in 2015 that all Foundation grant making would be organized and streamlined around the *concept of inequality*. One of the seven thematic areas now featured on Ford's website is *Creativity and Free Expression*, which "play a central role in weaving the fabric of a just society – a society in which exclusion and inequality can never stand unchallenged" (Ford Foundation, 2017). As the Foundation invests in organizations "that are pivotal in fighting inequality and making meaningful progress in creativity and free expression", it will further focus grant making under two sub-themes: "Social justice storytelling" and "21st century arts infrastructure" (Ford Foundation, 2017). Walker has spoken eloquently on how the arts "create economies of empathy" in building social movements. If there is crisis in the arts world, it is in part because "we have raised market-oriented thinking above all other kinds and categories of human understanding" (Walker, 2015). He argues that the United States' greatness is revealed through its arts, and that America currently suffers from a poverty "of heart and mind, of spirit and soul, of civic imagination" which can be addressed through sustained funding for the arts (Walker, 2017).

Some of the Foundation's recent domestic grants reflect this orientation. For example, a grant of USD 10 million to United States Artists will build an endowment for that group to continue providing grants to individual artists in a range of fields and genres. The 'storytelling strategy' in the U.S. embraces Ford's *JustFilms* documentary initiative, and *arts infrastructure* builds on what Ford has already been doing in the U.S. for some years under the rubric of *supporting diverse arts spaces*. In 2015, the Foundation made a total of 141 grants totaling USD 44.5 million under the *Freedom of Expression* theme (now superseded); over half of this support went for arts

18 While there is no space here for detailed discussion, it seems clear that a decline in public support for tertiary education, and the fact that humanities subjects do not bring major research dollars to universities, has contributed to shifting priorities.

spaces, while most of the rest of the grants supported media access and the JustFilms initiative. There were also grants to a number of mainstream New York cultural institutions (Metropolitan Opera Association, New York Shakespeare Festival, New York Public Library, Vivian Beaumont Theater, etc.), suggesting that Ford intends to maintain a place among the city's prominent arts patrons.

This all sounds reassuring for culture in the United States, but the picture does not appear as bright when we look at the Foundation's overseas activities. In Ford's field offices, in fact, culture programs were curtailed under Walker's predecessor.¹⁹ While Walker himself served as Vice President for Education, Media, Arts and Culture, at the same time, a focus on public service media and Internet access was enlarged. Program officers assigned to work on cultural vitality and interpretation disappeared around 2007, and today it is not clear whether any field office staff have specific roles under *Creativity and Free Expression*.²⁰ The 2015 grants database includes a handful of grants under *Diverse Arts Spaces* from the Cairo and Mexico City field offices; there are none from Asia offices. In 2016 some 171 grants related to Creativity and Free Expression were made worldwide for a total of USD 69.3 million; in Asia, there were only seven grants (two in China and five in Indonesia). While it may still be too early to fully define new directions in cultural programming, the relative absence of culture among current Asia field office priorities is not encouraging.

There are other reasons to wonder how Ford will treat cultural issues and problems in future, and whether new philanthropy perspectives and models have perhaps taken root more deeply during its program realignment. For example, the Foundation for many years used a succinct media tag for acknowledgment on television and radio: "Ford Foundation: A resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide". Today, however, the Foundation sees itself as "Working with visionaries on the frontlines of social change worldwide, to address inequality in all its forms". The new tag posits an activist stance, putting the donor right alongside, if not leading, grantees in the social justice struggle. One wonders whether those who might hesitate to claim the status of visionaries can still get a hearing from the Foundation, and whether support for individual artists and scholars has been eclipsed by a focus on institution-building.

The way Ford now describes Creativity and Free Expression stresses utility and purpose: art as instrument for something else. The arts do not exist in and of themselves; they "address inequality" and "contribute to a fairer and more just society" (Ford Foundation, 2017). There is no doubt that storytelling exists in a myriad of contexts around the world, responding to varied social, educational or communitarian needs. However, for the Foundation it necessarily "addresses issues of justice" and "fuels change" (Ford Foundation, 2017). There is more than a hint of agenda-setting here; how will this lexicon be translated, literally and figuratively, outside the United States? Who decides which projects will "transform attitudes that perpetuate injustice" (Supporting the most innovative, 2016)²¹ and how will results in terms of

19 Luis Ubiñas was Ford's President from 2007-2013.

20 Staffing and assignments are still shifting in the wake of President Walker's realignment around inequality. My comments reflect current information available at www.fordfoundation.org, as well as discussions with several field office observers.

21 From a description on Ford's website of a recent Foundation grant in partnership with the Skoll and

attitudes and more justice be assessed? A recent profile of Darren Walker in *The New Yorker* described ongoing debates about the implications of addressing inequality: “Ford believed in supporting art as a means of disrupting dominant narrative”, notes the author, “but art didn’t always do what you wanted it to” (MacFarquhar, 2016).

Because the Foundation has long played a leading role in drawing attention to issues of cultural vitality and interpretation in Asia, eliminating cultural programs is certain to have an impact on the larger field. There is data suggesting that Ford’s turn away from culture in its international work is already having an effect. According to the Foundation Center,²² in 2002 Ford provided by far the largest share of grants for Arts and Culture to recipients outside the United States, making 138 grants (39% of the number of grants made in this category) with a total value of USD 20.1 million (equal to 42% of the amount of resources all US foundations provided for Arts and Culture outside the United States). As of 2012, Ford still made the largest number of Arts and Culture grants (61, or 21% of the total), but provided only USD 12.2 million in overseas grants (just 20% of the total grant amounts). Further, while in 2002 there were eleven Asian grantee organizations on the Foundation Center’s list of the top 50 recipients of Arts and Culture grants outside the US, by 2012 there were only two Asian grantees on that list.

Global philanthropy has been transformed by many factors, not least among them the electronic information revolution that enables instantaneous contact between staff in field offices and headquarters. This means that ways of working have changed, and so have the interactions among staff in field offices and headquarters. Whereas field office communications with New York once took place primarily through weekly airmail pouches, today it is not uncommon for Foundation staff in Asia to stay up late at night for regular teleconferences. Grants processing, meeting agendas, budgeting and accounting, personnel, and other operations are increasingly uniform, digitized and centralized in the hands of managers based at headquarters.

Ford’s global structure entails reaching the right balance between operational efficiency and field office creativity and autonomy. Running field offices with international staff is an expensive business that demands attention to maintaining an institutional profile in local contexts, to nurturing extensive networks, and to making sure that New York staff includes people who understand the complexity and nuance of overseas work. Some experienced hands have wondered if Ford’s ‘back-office’ functions could more easily be centralized entirely in New York, which would mean even smaller staff levels overseas. Indeed, few philanthropies these days see utility in keeping in-country staff on the ground, preferring an approach that flies out teams of consultants and evaluators instead. This may be effective for donors who design programs at a distance and then ‘contract out’ to appropriate governments or non-profits for implementation. However, it might not be as productive an approach for Ford’s traditionally more engaged philanthropy.

In a recent speech accepting an award from the Studio Museum in Harlem in New York City, President Walker noted that the arts are a powerful tool for challenging

BRITDOC Foundations that will provide second-stage funding for joint projects by social entrepreneurs and filmmakers

22 See www.data.foundationcenter.org for relevant lists and tables.

“persistent stereotypes and cultural narratives that undermine fairness, tolerance and inclusion”. Such narratives persist outside the boundaries of the United States, and are troubling in the Asian settings of Ford’s field offices. In India, for instance, exclusionary social structures persist alongside a rampant, growing religious nationalism that is leading to oppression of minority communities and growing censorship in the arts, literature, and the teaching of history. Many ethnic minority peoples of China, especially in the Tibetan and Uighur regions, face relentless pressure on their languages, religions, and lifeways. In Indonesia, religious intolerance is expanding into both cultural and political spheres in alarming ways. The Foundation has accumulated significant experience in these countries with local activists who promote historical interpretation, appreciation of ethnic diversity, creative expression, and the vitality of living traditions – experience that could be translated into changing contexts to address current challenges.

In the end, what matters for Ford’s international philanthropy is not only how aspirational it might be in promoting disruption of the drivers of inequality. What will also matter is whether it uses the unique leverage of its offices around the world to sustain grant making that is informed by local insight, in the hands of creative and engaged staff who can implement its realigned mandate in grounded, relevant ways. I have suggested that a focus on culture and humanities embeds credibility, empathy, and deeper awareness within the Foundation. Such focus has made the Foundation an exceptional donor during the rich history of its grant making in Asia. As an organization that tries to place people’s real-world experience, dreams, identities, and vulnerabilities foremost, the Ford Foundation has from the beginning of its work in Asia seen a role for attention to cultural vitality and creative interpretation of human experience. That is a unique and immeasurable part of Ford’s own heritage – and one that its leaders should be proud to sustain.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ideas for this paper were first developed for the 2016 conference on *Heritage as Aid and Diplomacy* hosted by the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden. The author thanks William Klausner, Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh, Minh Kauffman, Rachel Cooper, Michael DiGregorio, and Oscar Salemink for helpful conversations in preparing this publication.

Moving Beyond Charity to Philanthropy? The Case of Charitable Giving in Thailand

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► Phaholyothin, N. (2017). Moving beyond charity to philanthropy? The case of charitable giving in Thailand. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 185-203.

This paper outlines the characteristics of the philanthropic sector in Thailand today. It first describes the local concept of giving, which is intricately linked to Theravada Buddhism. Then, the paper provides examples of traditional forms of philanthropic institutions that are more closely associated with charity than philanthropy, followed by examples of innovative forms of philanthropic efforts. Given the trajectory of economic development in Thailand, opportunities to engage broader public interest in philanthropy exist and in order to do so, there is need for the sector in general to build stronger evidence of how public giving is translated into social impact. The main challenge to the Thai philanthropic sector is the limited attention to accountability and transparency, as philanthropic entities generally have not developed robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that target outcomes. This can be turned into an opportunity to address the general lack of focus on strategy development, weak monitoring systems, and a limited reporting of outcomes.

Keywords: Charity; Giving; Philanthropic Organizations; Thai Philanthropy; Thailand



INTRODUCTION

Not much has been written about the evolution of charitable giving in Thailand from traditional practices related to religious giving to corporate and social giving today. There are very few scholarly works that have studied philanthropic activities in Thailand (Wattanasiritham, 2007). Two underlying reasons may be behind the sparse literature on the philanthropic sector in Thailand: 1) The understanding of philanthropy as a sector or a professional area of expertise is at a nascent stage, and 2) there are few examples of local organizations operating in a manner that qualifies as philanthropy as practiced in North America and Western Europe.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a general overview of the context of charitable giving in Thailand, and to analyze the current landscape of charitable giving with examples of emerging forms of socially conscious entities working towards the betterment of Thai society.¹ I will argue that practices of the current philanthropic sector in Thailand are generally closer to charity than

¹ This paper was written based on a series of grants funded by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2014 and 2015 towards strengthening the philanthropic sector in Thailand. Several of the sources used in this paper are drawn from grantee reports that were supported by the Foundation.

philanthropy. In the following, I will first describe traditional forms of giving in Thailand to establish the context of charity in Thailand, which is driven by deep religious beliefs in Theravada Buddhism where traditional forms of giving still permeate most socially-driven programs in Thailand. Then, I will present emerging local institutions which distinguish themselves by various characteristics that may qualify them as emergent forms of philanthropic entities. These examples demonstrate the diversity of Thailand's charitable sector today, ranging from large Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs to small foundations set up by 'high net-worth individuals'² to an informal network of like-minded professionals who coalesce through Facebook. In the last section, I will describe the challenges that lie ahead for Thailand's emerging philanthropic sector such as the need to strengthen accountability and transparency through stronger monitoring frameworks, and to build a collaborative culture across actors to leverage the impact of programs targeting similar social outcomes. The transition from a model of traditional charity to philanthropy is still in the making and the Thai case might demonstrate a home-grown repertoire of socially conscious forms of giving, or a local model of philanthropy that extends beyond financial support.

THE CONCEPT OF GIVING IN THAILAND

According to the *Charities Aid Foundation's* (CAF) (2015) *World Giving Index 2015*, Myanmar ranks as the world's most charitable country. The United States and New Zealand came in second and third place, respectively. Thailand was among the top 20, ranking number 19 globally. This is not a new record for Thailand, as the country has been among CAF's top twenty during previous years as well. Looking over the previous five years, the CAF World Ranking Index places Thailand at number 16. The CAF calculates its World Ranking based on three components of giving: 1) helping a stranger, 2) donating money, and 3) volunteering time, with the assumption that giving and helping others are natural human instincts.

The CAF report attributes Myanmar's high giving index to the deep belief in Theravada Buddhism that translates into the practice of donating to temples, as well as volunteering time towards their upkeep and maintenance. Myanmar and Thailand rank number one and two respectively in terms of percentage of people and number of people who donate money to charitable causes. The CAF World Giving Index 2015 reports that, "both Myanmar and Thailand have a high proportion of Theravada Buddhists practicing Sangha Dana which drives this high donation rate" (p. 19). *Sangha dana* refers to the practice of charitable giving to the community of ordained monks. While Theravada Buddhism encourages the practice of donation to religious causes, it may not be the only driving force that contributes to the high levels of donations. Charitable giving in Thailand is influenced by the Buddhist principles of *karma*³, as well as socio-cultural norms based on a political system rooted in kinship, family affiliation, regional ties, and networks that shape local attitudes on giving (Ockey, 1994).

2 In the investment sector, private banking, and philanthropic institutions, 'high-net worth' is used to designate persons who hold a big amount of assets for investment.

3 Karma is derived from Sanskrit *karman* (action, effect, fate). I will use the Sanskrit spelling of the word in this paper.

Understanding charitable giving in Thailand must take into account the local belief system that is heavily influenced by Theravada Buddhism, which constitutes the socio-cultural dimensions of giving (Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, 2001; Keyes, 1971). One cannot look at giving in isolation, but in relation to the drivers of charitable actions. The principle of reincarnation is a fundamental belief in Theravada Buddhism. All life forms are reincarnated in a cycle of birth, life, and death without an end unless one reaches *nirvana*, or enlightenment. *Tham bun*, or making merit, is a means to accumulate good deeds (Fuengfusakul, 1993). The role that *karma* plays in determining reincarnation is key to understanding why people give to charitable causes. *Karma*, as defined in Theravada Buddhism, is action that is driven by an intention. Good *karma* is action that is driven by good intentions and making merit or meritorious deeds will contribute to accumulating good *karma*. One’s accumulated *karma* will determine the kind of rebirth or reincarnation of future lives. This core belief is a fundamental principle that drives charitable giving in Thailand (Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, 2001, p. 2 ; Nye, 2008). The common belief in the karmic cycle based on one’s accumulated good deeds incentivizes people to donate towards religious causes. Ordinary Thais make merit through various forms of giving. The most popular and traditional form of giving is to temples in the form of monetary contributions. Giving alms to monks in the early morning is also widely practiced. The practice of soliciting money from friends, family members, and colleagues for a merit-making trip to a temple is wide spread. Another practice that reinforces one’s “karmic savings” is the practice of donations for oneself or loved ones who are alive, or also deceased (Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, 2001, p. 2).

Breakdown of Social Giving in Thailand:	
<u>Most frequent beneficiaries of giving:</u>	
Temples or religious institutions	93.3%
Educational institutions	83.4%
Hospitals and health organizations	74.7%
Community organizations	65.2%
Royal-affiliated projects	49.6%
<u>Most trusted charitable organizations:</u>	
Temples or religious institutions	47.9%
Royal-affiliated projects	23.3%
Educational institutions	15.8%
Hospitals and health organizations	5.6%
Community organizations	4.3%
<u>Most effective charitable organizations:</u>	
Temples or religious institutions	31.6%
Royal-affiliated projects	20.4%
Educational institutions	20.4%
Hospitals and health organizations	14.2%
Community organizations	8.5%

Table 1: Breakdown of Social Giving in Thailand (Chhina, Petersik, Loh, & Evans, 2014, p. 92)

Also common in Thailand is to make contributions for the costs of funerals. It is customary that friends and co-workers make monetary contributions to the family of the deceased. Each contribution is made voluntarily and the amount is entirely based on the donor's social status and ability to pay. Weddings also draw in monetary contributions. Such widespread social practices reflect social expectations in which giving serves as social glue in networks and communities. In rural areas, giving towards social events such as funerals, weddings, and the ordination of monks and novices constitutes a normal part of engaging in community life. Charitable giving as a social practice is meant to solidify the sense of belonging, the community, or the family. Local attitudes toward giving are influenced by the idea that if one is to give, then one should not expect anything in return. This notion may owe its origins to the Buddhist ideal of selflessness as a virtuous mindset that has a positive karmic value. Later sections of this paper will establish the link between this belief and challenges in transitioning from charity to philanthropy in Thailand.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHARITABLE GIVING

Thailand is heralded as an economic success story. It earned the classification as a 'high middle income' country in 2011 according to the World Bank's ranking. Except for the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the Thai economy has grown steadily in the past three decades at an annual average rate of 7.5% per year from 1986 to 1996, and at a slower rate of 5% from 1999 to 2005. As a consequence, the poverty rate fell from 67% in 1989 to only 11% in 2014 (Pasul & Baker, 1998; World Bank, 2016). As the country continues to advance economically and thus building a larger middle class, it is hypothesized that donations towards charitable causes would increase. Calculations done by the *Thailand Development and Research Institute* (TDRI) based on household surveys seem to support this assumption. In 2014, donations from Thai households towards charitable causes amounted to THB 75 million, or around 0.6% of Thailand's GDP of that year (Sumano, 2016).

Despite Thailand's impressive economic achievements, growing inequalities, especially those along the urban-rural dimension, pose a major challenge for the country to escape the 'middle income trap'. This is understood as an economic development ceiling which a country is unable to surpass without undergoing major structural changes that require moving from labor- and capital-intensive industries towards an innovations-driven economy. Given the 2008 financial crisis that has affected the world economy, Thailand has seen sluggish economic growth with an average annual growth rate of 3.5%. The rural areas, where the majority of the population resides, still face serious disparities relative to their urban counterparts, such as access to quality education and healthcare. With new challenges to the Thai economy these gaps risk becoming wider. According to the World Bank, in 2013 80% of the country's 7.3 million poor were living in rural areas (World Bank, 2016). Recognizing that gains from participation in the global economy are not distributed equitably to address urban-rural inequalities, there is an emerging awareness among NGOs, the development and research community, and concerned public officials in Thailand that the country needs to break out of the middle income trap. This might require innovations to promote specific reforms such as in the education sector. In this spirit,

a handful of local organizations and some private sector champions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are thinking of innovative ways to run their charitable organizations and turn charity – that is defined as giving without any expectation in return – into philanthropy, understood as investing from private sources for the public interest towards the goal of sustained impact.

Based on data from the CAF report, Thailand has ranked consistently high in terms of monetary donations. 78% of Thais reported having made monetary contributions while only 15% of those surveyed responded that they had volunteered towards a charitable cause (Charities Aid Foundation, 2015, p. 12). If time dedicated or volunteered to a charitable cause is used as the indicator, Thailand ranks 98 out of a total of 145 countries. This suggests that time is the rarer commodity in the lives of Thais today, and monetary contributions are the preferred means of charitable giving since it is easy to do ‘with no strings attached’. With the disparities growing between rural and urban areas, this pattern of giving indicates that charitable financial contributions would need to address problems that result from the rural-urban gap.

In a study on social investment in selected ASEAN countries, three main characteristics of charitable giving were identified in Thailand (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 91):

1. Giving is very much part of Thai culture and linked to religious beliefs in making merit or *tham bun*;
2. Charitable giving is done in an ad-hoc manner dominated by individual giving which is motivated largely through personal connections or affiliations;
3. A large part of charitable giving goes to religious causes, organizations, or projects under royal patronage, and well-known charities or foundations.

These findings, along with my argumentation here, suggest that traditional giving in Thailand is more akin to charity than to philanthropy. The first and third findings underline the assumption that giving in Thailand is largely driven by religious beliefs and is mostly done through traditional forms of charity represented by temples, established foundations, and charities. The second finding corroborates the notion that charitable giving is motivated by social cohesion and belonging to a group, as well as by the wish to enhance one’s social status or connections.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILANTHROPY IN THAILAND

In Thailand, royal charities and projects under royal patronage occupy a significant proportion of charitable giving and have contributed to improving the livelihoods of many of their beneficiaries, especially in remote and rural areas. The three principal royal charities are the *Sai-Jai Thai Foundation*, which began in 1976, the *Chaipattana Foundation*, and the *Mae Fah Luang Foundation*, both established in 1988. Numerous royal projects funded by these three royal foundations form the basis of Thailand’s charitable sector. Royal charities are the product of King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s (Rama IX; 1946-2016) vision to assist his people and improve their well-being through sustainable agriculture, conservation of the ecosystem, and maintaining a well-balanced and self-sufficient livelihood. These projects aim to foster solidarity among all Thais, wherein “Thais should help and support other Thais” (Sai-Jai

Thai Foundation, n.d.). King Bhumibol started these foundations at the time when Thailand was still a low income country, surrounded by political instability and war in neighboring countries. The rural Thai population was desperately poor and had limited economic opportunities to make a better living. Hence, bridging the inequality gap lies at the heart of the mission of these royal projects.

The royal projects under the above mentioned royal foundations are distinct from the rest of the philanthropic and charitable sector in Thailand because they are managed systematically, are highly organized, and have been in existence over a relatively long period of time compared to CSR programs or activities of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They belong in a category beyond the diverse and fragmented charitable sector because they have reached the scale and sustainability in which impact to segments of society has been palpable. In addition, royal projects are systematically organized and managed by professionals who are hired for various tasks. The *Doi Tung project*, for example, is highly sustainable as it operates as a social enterprise linking local producers and small farmers to urban consumers in Bangkok and secondary cities. The Chaipattana Foundation funds projects not only in Thailand, but also in neighboring countries and in locations outside the ASEAN region. Hence, royal charities will not be part of my discussion.

The Thai philanthropic sector is composed of an amalgam of diverse types of organizations, ranging from NGOs, corporate giving programs, public funds, hospitals, and faith-based organizations, to well-established foundations and social enterprises (Wattanasiritham, 2007). To the public at large, all these organizations work in a sector generally known as the 'charitable sector' where there is little understanding between what distinguishes charity from CSR or from philanthropy. For example, in Thai there is no direct translation of the term 'philanthropy'. A broad translation of 'charitable activities' or 'socially driven activities' are used to signify the English term. Still today, the deeply engrained notion of making merit is intertwined with charity, as in the expression *tham bun tham than*, (literally 'make merit, make a donation'). Thus, projects funded under various 'philanthropic' causes, more often than not, do not invest in building sustained impact for the beneficiaries, but rather, contribute towards immediate or short-term results. Giving in itself is a charitable act, and thus, the engagement of the giver ends once the giving is done.

A typical annual activity that is considered as 'philanthropic' in Thailand consists of the campaign run by a corporate or private entity to collect donations for the purchase of blankets for poor families in remote areas of Northern Thailand (ThaiBev, 2016). The assumption of the program is that poor rural families in the north lack blankets and so face hardship and health vulnerabilities during the winter months. The underlying assumption is that providing blankets will contribute to improving their well-being. There have been very few attempts to assess systematically whether such an endeavor creates the results that are expected, or whether there are alternate methods to improve the living conditions for disadvantaged villagers during the cold winter months. The understanding of the objectives of strategic investment to obtain a sustained outcome and impact is absent from such programs. Other philanthropic activities, supported by the private sector, consist of providing scholarships to disadvantaged children. Yet, there is little follow up on the educational achievements of the students, the assumption being that just providing

financial support is sufficient to improve the education of the recipient. Most scholarship programs fail to comprehend that a robust education is more than attending classroom lectures, but includes supportive structures such as counselling, working closely with the students' families, and consistent follow-up that is made together with the school and the students, as well as connecting the students with appropriate career prospects. Similar to initiatives that provide blankets to poor villagers, these scholarship programs do not focus on sustained and strategic investments to have a positive impact on the students. Investing resources towards building enhanced capacity for teachers and more productive teaching methods might yield greater educational benefits for the pupils. Nevertheless, the most popular charitable cause remains scholarships to poor and disadvantaged school children (Sumano, 2016).

EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS

There are a few examples of well-established charitable organizations that bridge the traditional notion of 'charity' and that of 'philanthropy'. More recently, new forms of philanthropic efforts by new groups of local actors have emerged as a response to the changing social and political content. The following examples are by no means exhaustive, but attempt to demonstrate some key characteristics of traditional philanthropic organizations that have achieved a certain level of impact and scale.

The Thailand Development and Research Institute (TDRI) undertook research on religious giving and found approximately 40,000 temples throughout the country with an average annual income from donations of THB 3.4 million, or USD 96,200, and associated annual expenditures of THB 2.8 million, or USD 79,200. Each year, the average total amount of money that goes to temples nation-wide is estimated at THB 100 billion or USD 2.8 billion (TDRI, 2017). This remarkable figure seems to support the CAF study and attests to the deep spirit of giving among Buddhist Thais. The problem is that giving is not accompanied by an equally robust accountability system. In the same TDRI study it was discovered that the majority of temples do not possess a systematic process of accounting, and accounting books do not meet general standards. In recent years, numerous scandals involving inappropriate uses of donation money by temples in Thailand have prompted the public to demand for greater accountability and transparency.

According to a recent study, from a sample of 39,513 households, 93% participate in giving towards religious activities (Kanchanachitra, 2014). The study defines this category of giving as 'merit-making', thus purely for religious reasons linked to Buddhist beliefs in accumulating good *karma* through making merit. The study also looks at giving as making donations for non-religious reasons, such as to established charities, foundations, and organizations. From the same survey, the percentage of Thai households that made donations to non-religious causes was estimated at 18%, considerably lower than for religious giving. The study also reveals that households that donate to charitable organizations for non-religious causes tend to have relatively higher household incomes and have a higher proportion of heads of households with a university degree. Based on these findings, it seems that there is much space for the development of the philanthropic sector in Thailand. As Thai households are becoming more urban and have a smaller family size, these households will have

fewer dependents and thus more disposable income. Thus there is the potential to broaden philanthropic engagement and to make giving more systematic and strategic by tapping into these educated and urban households.

Unfortunately, the study does not delve further into analyzing which categories of charities or foundations benefit the most from non-religious donations. Based on my field observations and discussions with professionals working in the non-profit sector, another category which receives significant contributions from the Thai public is foundations that serve the three main hospitals and medical schools in Bangkok: the *Siriraj Foundation*, the *Ramathibodhi Foundation*, and the *Thai Red Cross Society* which manages Chulalongkorn Hospital. For middle- to high-income households, donating to these large hospitals is compelling for several reasons. The first is that the institutions have well-organized structures to manage donations, and second that they have a clear mission easily understood by the public, which is to deliver quality healthcare and to reduce the pain and suffering from illness and disease. Third, these hospitals are recognized centers of excellence with a long history of public service to the people. The Thai Red Cross Society Board is chaired by Princess Sirindhorn. Royal patronage of hospital foundations provides a basis of trust among the public that their donations will be put to best use. Each hospital operates various trust funds and donors can specify that their contributions go towards a given cause. For wealthy individuals, giving to such hospitals or an affiliated trust fund is a common way to contribute to charity and to society in general, and one that also brings recognition to the individual and their family. Sizeable donations that for example support the construction of a new wing, or a new building at a hospital usually mean a visible outcome as well as broad recognition of the donation. It is common that a commemorative tablet, inscribed with names of generous donors, is placed at the entry of a ward or in the lobby of the donated building, or in a location visible to visitors. This type of giving by a select group of wealthy individuals instills a sense of longevity and permanence to the act of generosity, as infrastructure stands the test of time.

One of the best-known foundations is the *Poh Teck Tung Foundation*, which began in 1910 (Poh Teck Tung Foundation, 2010). Its activities were funded by a wealthy first generation of Sino-Thai merchants who settled in Siam⁴ or by the second generation who descended from migrants from China. The founders were inspired by the legend of a Buddhist monk who dedicated his life to serving poor and sick people to relieve them of pain and suffering. In 1937, the Poh Teck Tung Foundation was registered officially as the *Huakiew Poh Teck Siang Tung Foundation*. It had a revolving fund of THB 2,000, with a board of directors composed of 16 members. According to their website, the Poh Teck Tung Foundation is one of the biggest charitable organizations in the country. Its mission consists of offering relief during disasters, providing education and healthcare and supporting culture and arts. Among its best-known activities is their role of retrieving corpses from accidents and catastrophes and taking charge of them, including cremation if no family or relatives can be identified. One of their contributions was the construction of the Huachiew Hospital, a large hospital in Bangkok that provides a comprehensive list of services. As a well-established and highly organized organization, the Poh Teck Tung Foundation delivers visible and

4 Thailand was formerly known as Siam. The name was changed in 1949.

quantifiable results. With the visibility of its charitable activities and a history interwoven with the development of Bangkok's Chinatown, the foundation garners trust from the local community and the Thai-Chinese public, which in turn perpetuates the virtuous cycle of giving from individuals and businesses.

The philanthropic organizations cited in the examples above do not make their annual donation or programmatic activities easily accessible to the public. For example, all three hospital foundations have websites that allow easy donations online, but do not present details of their charitable activities or on how donations have been spent. The absence of such information might be due to weak interest from the public to seek such information after a donation has been made, thus reflecting the belief that giving is not to expect anything in return, not even following up on how the donation was spent or the results of the contribution. Another plausible explanation is that setting up monitoring and evaluation systems is relatively costly and requires specific skills and knowledge. The amount of effort and resources required for a monitoring and evaluation system may not be considered as a strategic use of funds if there is no real demand to use such data to improve performance or refine current programs for greater impact to society. Therein lie the limitations of most traditional philanthropic organizations in Thailand that impede their categorization as professionally-run 'philanthropic organizations'.

NEW FORMS OF PHILANTHROPIC ENGAGEMENT

As Thailand has graduated into being an upper-middle income country, its socio-economic development has spawned innovative forms of philanthropic entities and charitable models of giving. These newer actors are as diverse as the more traditional ones. The entities I cover in this section represent some of the innovations and demonstrate the diversity of emergent philanthropic actors.

One of the largest grant-making entities is the *Thai Health Promotion Foundation* or *Thai Health*, founded in 2001 under the Health Promotion Foundation Act. Thai Health operates through a fund collected from a 2% 'sin tax' or excise tax on tobacco and alcohol, which amounts to approximately USD 120 million annually (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, n.d.). The foundation interprets 'health promotion' broadly through the lens of well-being, which encompasses four dimensions of health – physical, mental, spiritual, and social. The majority of Thai Health's grantees are local NGOs, universities, and research institutions. With its large annual budget funding over 1,000 projects per year, Thai Health has been criticized for distorting the NGO sector by creating a monopoly on funding and influencing the priorities and programs of the civil society sector. With an annual endowment guaranteed by law from the Thai state, Thai Health is a key funding organization in the country.

Thai Health can be considered a new form of local philanthropy as its institutional structure best fits the characteristics of a typical foundation: 1) it has a secure endowment source, through sin taxes; 2) it does not receive donations or money from the public or any other source; 3) it possesses a governance and staffing structure comparable to other professionally-run foundations; and 4) it implements strategic programs. Thai Health is overseen by a board, managed by a CEO and run by staff recruited based on their qualifications. It has an independent evaluation board comprising of seven

members who are experts from areas in health promotion, evaluation, and finance. The function of the evaluation board is to execute overall performance evaluations of the organization, and according to state legislation, Thai Health is obliged to report annually to the cabinet as well as to both houses of the Thai parliament.

In Thailand, large foundations such as Thai Health are the exceptions rather than the norm. Philanthropic efforts of wealthy individuals are made primarily through the family corporation with some activities managed by a small family foundation. In the study undertaken by the *Lien Centre for Social Innovation*, families of high net-worth individuals in Thailand, as in other Asian countries, engage in charitable activities through two principal channels: a family foundation that often focuses on charitable purposes such as in the areas of youth, education, and poverty alleviation; and a corporate program attached to the family business (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 93). The study concludes with the emerging trend in Thailand in which philanthropic activities are being pursued out of corporate entities rather than private foundations. Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR is a subject that is broadly understood by the general public and the urban middle class and thus has attracted more interest than philanthropy (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 93). The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) even set up a CSR Institute in 2007 and the *Asian Center for Corporate Social Responsibility (ACCSR)* was created in 2009 based at the Asia Institute of Technology in Bangkok. While this may be a positive sign for CSR in Thailand, family foundations remain small in terms of size of endowment and staffing, with family members facing the challenge to dedicate sufficient time and effort in managing the foundation (“The Changing Face”, 2015).

Thai corporations, led by *Siam Cement Group (SCG)*, *Central Group*, and *Premier Group*, are re-thinking how they engage in the betterment of Thailand by leap-frogging traditional models of community engagement, volunteering, and ad hoc donations by setting up programs that empower local communities through activities that build their capacities and valorize local resources (Chhina et al., 2014). SCG is the kingdom’s oldest and most highly respected conglomerates, founded in 1913 by King Rama VI (1910-1925) to provide domestically produced cement and construction materials for the country’s infrastructure. SCG started the *SCG Foundation* which focuses on children, youth, and community support during disaster relief efforts, such as the Indian Ocean Tsumani in 2004 and the floods in 2011. For the year 2012, the SCG Foundation reported on its website that it disbursed THB 563 million towards community development, social infrastructure, and the environment (Chhina et al., 2014). Given the size of its annual CSR disbursement, SCG is among the top corporate givers in Thailand (Onozawa, 2013). Chaovalit Ekabut, currently president of SCG, explains that “CSR is not an extra activity, it is our duty” (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 21).

Central Group is the country’s largest retail conglomerate, which has expanded into real estate, commercial property development, hotels, and restaurants. Central Group began as a merchandise store located in Chinatown, founded in 1947 by Tiang Chirathivat, a Hainanese Chinese who immigrated to Thailand. In 1957, his son Samrit Chirathivat opened the first Central Department store. Like many Asian family-businesses, ‘Central’ – as it is commonly referred to – is now run by Tiang’s children and grandchildren. One active family member who oversees Central Group’s CSR program is Busaba Chirathivat whose strategy aims to link local communities to its supply chain, explicitly working with local government agencies through the

state-run OTOP program to source products and materials.⁵ Central brings its purchasers and merchandising managers to train communities in developing products for their market. Participating communities which face cash flow problems receive accelerated payment for their goods. This program works in 25 provinces with 45 communities across Thailand (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 95). Another feature of their CSR program is to work with persons with disabilities through the *Mahathai Foundation* – Thailand’s largest association for disabled persons, which helps identify appropriate candidates to work at Central Group’s repair and call centers for Central’s Power Buy, an electrical appliances retail chain.

Many extremely wealthy individuals run CSR programs through their own corporations, and thus, may not be drawn into creating their own private foundations, which are time consuming and intellectually demanding. According to an article on the website of Wealth-X, a business specializing in global wealth information, family foundations are gaining ground in Asia among the wealthy as a way to deliver charitable activities, and yet, creating such foundations may prove to be easier than actually managing them:

The Asian foundation industry is in its infancy compared to Europe and the US, although it is on the rise ... There is no official estimate for Asia but it is likely to be less than 10,000, experts say. Many of these have fallen into inactivity as they don’t have a dedicated professional running them ... ‘Many family foundations in Asia were set up by the patriarch years ago and are now dormant, usually because the family has been too busy running the business’ Chow [a philanthropy consultant at law firm Withers Worldwide] said. (“The Changing Face”, 2015)

An exception to this general trend is Premier Group’s chairman, Vichien Pongsathorn, who provides a cohesive strategy to the company’s CSR program. Premier Group is involved in a range of businesses ranging between consumer products, real estate and hotels, IT, transportation, environmental services, and what it calls “social sustainable development” (Premier, n.d.). Vichien believes that one of the missions of the Premier Group should be to mobilize greater participation from Thai society in resolving the country’s pressing problems (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 96). A key distinction in Premier’s corporate philanthropy is the recognition that partnerships and involvement of other stakeholders are critical for the creation of positive and lasting changes in Thai society (Premier, n.d.). Committed to philanthropic efforts, Premier Group garners 5% of its annual net profits towards its social sustainable development programs (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 96). This amount is unprecedented in Thailand as the corporate tax deduction is set at only 2% of net profits.

The Premier Group has taken a different strategy than other corporations. It has created four foundations to fulfill its mission: the *Yuvabadhana Foundation*, the *Enlive Foundation*, the *Khon Thai Foundation*, and the *Pan Kan Society*. The Yuvabadhana Foundation that started over 20 years ago helps disadvantaged children throughout the country through educational scholarships, support programs, and mentoring.

5 OTOP stands for “One Tambon One Product”, and is a program supported by the Thai government that aims to encourage each district or *tambon* to produce and sell a distinct local product made from local resources and by the local community.

Three million children benefit from their programs (Yuvabadhana Foundation, n.d.). The Enlive Foundation focuses on building increased awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and aims at promoting sustainable eco-tourism in which natural resources are preserved. The foundation encourages the involvement of local government agencies, local communities, and associations in its projects (Enlive Foundation, 2016). Enlive Foundation's annual reports are easily accessible from its website – a practice that is rare among Thai non-profit organizations. Founded in 2011, the Khon Thai Foundation has an ambitious goal of “creating a better Thai society through the development of scalable and replicable collaborative platforms [that] enable active citizens from all sectors to work together for the greater good for society” (Khon Thai Foundation, n.d.). The fourth foundation – Pan Kan Society – is a social enterprise in which profits go towards the Yuvabadhana Foundation's scholarships. ‘Pan Kan’ comes from the Thai term *baeng pan* meaning ‘to share with each other’. Pan Kan outlets collect donations of second hand clothing, books and household items which are in good condition, from the general public, and resells these items in Pan Kan shops at very low prices. It has faced a great increase in profits and is now undergoing expansion by also working with Mahathai Foundation to help that organization to set up their own versions of social enterprises (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 96). In 2016, Vichien Pongsathorn was listed among Forbes Asia's top philanthropists along with Harald Link of the B.Grimm Group (Koppisch, 2016).

The American business magazine Forbes has reported about noteworthy Asian philanthropists in its annual rankings, and in an article published in their print version on September 2015, entitled “In Asia, 40 Heroes of Philanthropy Are Making Their Mark” (Koppisch, 2015). It selected people who give their own money rather than re-purposing a percentage of their company's revenues towards charitable causes because, according to their opinion, “donating shareholder funds isn't exactly philanthropy” (Koppisch, 2016). Three philanthropists operating in Thailand made it on the list: Anchalika Kijkanakorn, Thanong Leeissaranukul, and a German national who runs philanthropic efforts in Thailand, Philipp Graf von Hardenberg. Anchalika Kijkanakorn is managing director of Akaryn Hospitality Management Services and created the *Pure Blue Foundation* in 2010 as a way to link her hotel business to environmental conservation and community service. Thanong Leeissaranukul is President of Sittipol Group and spearheaded the *Spare Human Parts* campaign to change public opinion on organ donation. At Sittipol, 30% of the profits or approximately USD 3.3 million are earmarked annually towards the Spare Human Parts campaign and for the assistance of the physically and mentally disabled and teachers in the armed conflict southern provinces of Thailand. In addition, the group's 20,000 employees can apply to fund books, equipment, or other support for schools in their respective hometowns (Koppisch, 2016). After the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Philipp Graf von Hardenberg established the Yaowawit School, which serves orphans, and the *Children's World Academy* – a supporting foundation. The school continues to educate underprivileged children in Kapong, in Southern Thailand, and has raised donations of more than USD 5 million for the school. These philanthropists are neither household names nor well-known within the CSR or corporate philanthropy sector, but nevertheless demonstrate the emergence of a new breed of Thai philanthropists who have the desire and the drive to make a positive change with their wealth and privilege.

There are also recent models of local philanthropy-cum-social-enterprise created by Thailand's urban and techno-savvy millennials. One such attempt that is becoming increasingly sustainable as a social enterprise is the platform *Social Giver*, which operates as a social enterprise that connects businesses to consumers by allowing businesses to sell excess capacity that otherwise would be unused, to consumers who can purchase services and goods at a bargain. For example, service providers such as restaurants or hotels can offer a discounted menu set for two or a hotel room on a certain date for a reduced price because there is no demand for those services on that particular date. This creates a win-win situation for all since the business operator can fill the excess capacity, the customer can purchase a service at a reduced price, and a clearly indicated charity receives a financial contribution from the sales of excess capacity. A significant percentage of Social Giver's profits go towards supporting development projects and charitable causes. The idea is that all businesses at one time or another face excess capacity that goes to waste, and this excess can be turned into a win-win model for business operators, consumers, and society as a whole. The transaction is conducted through Social Giver's online website.

Another similar effort is *Tae Jai*, which can be translated into English as "giving from the heart" and is an internet-based platform that connects individual donors to numerous development projects implemented by local NGOs, communities, and charities. It is supported and managed jointly by a network of non-profit organizations such as *Change Fusion*, the *Khon Thai Foundation*, *Ashoka Thailand*, the *Thai Young Philanthropists Network* (TYPN), *Open Dreams*, and Krung Thep Thurakit newspaper. According to its website, Tae Jai has raised close to THB 13 million from 3,631 donors for 179 projects throughout Thailand. Donors can follow the progress of their chosen projects, and once a project is completed, it is reported on the Tae Jai website. Tae Jai's innovation lies in connecting individual donors directly to development projects by providing both transparency and accountability through their vetting system and online monitoring.

The third example of innovative non-profit organizations is *Teach for Thailand* that addresses a pressing problem that most Thais are likely to identify with: inequitable access to quality education.⁶ Reforming the education sector is a critical pathway for Thailand to breach the middle income trap and propel itself in the ranks of an advanced economy. Teach for Thailand is a member of the global network, *Teach for All*, and aims to build young leaders through a model adapted to suit the context of Thailand's education inequities. It aims to develop a new education model for low income school children who live in slum communities in Bangkok. The model of Teach for Thailand is to recruit professionals and university graduates to teach at schools in poor neighborhoods where the majority of students are underprivileged. Each teacher-volunteer works to inspire, mentor, and evoke positive change among the students. Each volunteer will teach for two years. The goal is for young Thai professionals to become more engaged in teaching and giving back to society. Teach for Thailand recognizes that youth cannot fully develop into productive and socially engaged citizens without role models, mentors, and teachers who inspire them.

⁶ Teach for Thailand is a chapter of Teach for All. It is local in the sense that it has adapted a global model to suit the local context and to solve issues of inequity in Thailand's education sector.

Another new home-grown form of philanthropic engagement is the *Thai Young Philanthropist Network* (TYPN), which was established in 2008 as a network of young professionals and business leaders with a shared interest to foster positive change in Thailand (“The State of Philanthropy in Thailand”, 2016). The TYPN began during the period of political tensions in Thailand and mass protests in Bangkok. The founder, Ada Chirapaisarnkul, sensed that she and her peers in their twenties and thirties wanted to contribute to society and make their country a better place without joining any political faction. TYPN began to coalesce through Facebook, which at that time was still in its early days. According to Ada, users of Facebook in Thailand in 2008 were mostly university students and urban middle class professionals, and as a result, TYPN now consists of well-educated professionals who are also well-connected to national and global networks (interview with Ada Chirapaisarnkul). Today, TYPN has grown into a network of 2,500 members, 1,200 of whom have engaged in past activities. Forty core members commit their own time and resources to run the projects. TYPN, unlike other philanthropic entities, is not institutionalized in the sense that it has no legal entity and no regular operating offices other than that of its founder. Activities and projects are sought online through live chats and offline at weekend gatherings of TYPN members interested in a particular activity. While TYPN operates based on the volunteering time invested in an activity, the founder believes that members have already built sufficient trust to begin creating a fund and raising money (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 99). TYPN has been very active in the creation of social enterprises, including Tae Jai mentioned above. It has also partnered with the Ministry of Education to set up a Youth Entrepreneurship Training Program.

Thailand’s new forms of socially conscious organizations are varied and range from public organizations like Thai Health that use innovative tax financing to fund philanthropic activities, to loose networks of like-minded professionals who interact through social media platforms. In between, there are large Thai corporations that demonstrate commitment to social development by investing large portions of CSR budget to support capacity building initiatives of local communities and linking these communities to the supply chain, as well as working with disabled persons for a more inclusive business approach. Next to inspiring figures who serve as leadership examples, at a smaller scale, social enterprises like Social Giver are leveraging the connectivity of the internet to bring excess supply in the private sector to support local NGOs. All of these examples demonstrate the potential of the philanthropic sector in Thailand with programs that address specific social issues, target results, and social groups.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO TRANSFORM INTO A TRUE PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR

The conceptualization of philanthropy as practiced in North America and Western Europe, where there is an expectation that the philanthropic investment would have an impact, is still embryonic in Thailand and would require much coordinated effort to develop. Furthermore, as more traditional forms of socially-conscious giving are closer to charity, the sector has not made any adequate efforts to develop robust

monitoring systems for transparency and accountability. As long as having an impact is not considered an objective of local charities, these programs will not be designed to ensure that their activities translate into social change. This is a critical systemic problem of the sector as a whole and will have to be addressed if the ambitions of local charities are to have impact on the lives of the beneficiaries.

Despite these obstacles, there is much potential to expand the pool of charitable giving in Thailand and engage a broader segment of the growing middle class and local corporations. Yet, the main constraint that will have to be addressed and systematically resolved in order to create a platform and a nurturing environment to scale home-grown, innovative philanthropic efforts remains the low level of interest to measure results and track outcomes. If the aim of the entire sector altogether is to strengthen public engagement, Thailand's charitable sector must focus on measuring its impact more systematically and with tools that address the public's concern. One key point that triggers public anxiety is how donations are actually used by non-profit organizations, especially the smaller or less known ones. This mistrust is a key obstacle to strengthening and expanding the non-profit sector, and improving the lack of trust is regarded as an urgent need, especially among NGOs whose ability to deliver results, transparency, and operational efficiency are still limited (Chhina et al., 2014, p. 93). This point of action is particularly critical for capturing the potential of greater charitable giving by the growing middle class. Securing broader engagement from the public is not limited to the question of supply, where there must be a pool of compelling and attractive projects to fund. It is also a question of demand, in which non-profit organizations themselves must address the issue of building trust with the public to attain more funding for social causes. I surmise that weak accountability might be linked with the pervasive belief that charitable giving implies giving without expectations for anything in return – not even inquiring about the actual results of the giving. The English language TDRI blog on charity presents this wide-spread attitude in the following:

These statistics suggest that most Thais are kind and generous when it comes to giving money to others. But have we wondered whether our donation money makes any impact? ... We have been taught since we were kids that we shall give without demanding anything in return. Moreover, giving money is so swift and easy, but tracking requires time, efforts, and often more money. So why bother? (Sumano, 2016)

Building a robust accountability framework requires effort and money, as pointed out in the TDRI blog post. While some organizations have put in the effort required towards that goal, others lag behind. Understanding the core advantages of having transparent, accessible, and strong financial systems and program metrics, especially in attracting future funding, is a key factor that might motivate non-profit organizations to invest in such frameworks. *Resource Alliance*, a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom, helps Thai non-governmental organizations to build greater accountability by encouraging them to compete in the annual Thai NGO Awards. Resource Alliance has incorporated the *Thai NGO Awards* into its regional *Social Entrepreneur Awards* in 2016, as there was weak demand from local non-profit

organizations.⁷ On the supply side, non-profits, private foundations, and CSR programs hold responsibility vis-à-vis their donors and also towards themselves as professionals, to build a robust and reliable framework for monitoring the results of their social investments if they are to create growth pathways and remain relevant in an ever more competitive field. In addition, on the demand side, it might be time for the charitable sector in Thailand, including the donors themselves, to change the broad perception of donations as money ‘to give away’ into money to be invested into social impacts. One has to demand a socially impactful return for that charitable investment.

Moving from charity, as in giving money, food, or specific assistance to those in need, to philanthropy, which is the investment of private capital for the public good, remains an arduous task. One pathway to reaching this goal may be to transform the expectations around how charitable contributions to non-religious causes are used, tracked, and accounted for. Already, some of the larger CSR programs and innovative platforms mentioned in this paper are attempting to construct metrics to measure results. Working with well-respected organizations which have the technical expertise in philanthropy and in the management of non-profit entities can be a way to develop stronger accountability frameworks and measurement tools. Thai Health is known to have supported capacity building through “social return on investment” (SROI) as a tool to measure social impact in Thailand. Thailand’s National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) hosts the *Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society* which can compile best-practices for accountability and results tracking. Also present in Thailand is the *CSR Asia Center* at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), which serves as a knowledge hub and research and training center for sustainability practices. These institutions, acting as independent experts in technical areas of accountability, can be valuable partners in moving philanthropy forward and changing the mindset of donors as well as the public.

Corporate giving can play a role in instigating the professionalization of philanthropy in Thailand by modifying current practices. According to a grant report for the Rockefeller Foundation, challenges in current corporate giving practices relate to three main issues (School of Global Studies, 2017), the first being the lack of transparency in reporting. This problem is tied to the points mentioned above. Moreover, most companies do not disclose data on social and environmental activities of their CSR programs. While the *UN Global Compact* provides guiding principles for the private sector, most Thai companies perceive this as a burden rather than a useful guide that will enable them to become responsible businesses (School of Global Studies, 2017). In Thai companies, CSR units normally reside within marketing or public relations departments. Generally, Thai companies consider CSR as a component of public relations and marketing, rather than a vehicle to affect social change. Third, the practice of CSR and other types of corporate giving are still limited to donations, and not surprisingly, 98.5% of Thai CSR activities qualify as donations (School of Global Studies, 2017).

On a practical level, the tax code can be revised to encourage philanthropy in Thailand. Like most countries, Thailand allows tax deductions for both individuals and corporations. For companies, the total tax-deductible amount is limited to 2% of

⁷ In 2014, Resource Alliance received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to support the Thai NGO Awards.

net profits, while for individuals the deductible amount does not exceed 10% of net taxable income. According to tax lawyers and financial planners, these percentages are still relatively small, suggesting that they do not efficiently incentivize philanthropic giving (School of Global Studies, 2016, p.4). Furthermore, legal requirements render philanthropic giving beyond religious causes more cumbersome. For example, according to a report compiled by the School of Global Studies at Thammasat University (2016, p. 4), claiming a tax deduction for an educational institution may not be as easy because the tax law specifically indicates which types of contributions are tax-deductible. Furthermore, what is tax-deductible may not correspond to the needs of the school. Giving towards religious causes, however, is relatively easy. Reforming fiscal regulations to be more supportive of charitable giving to non-religious causes could promote larger allocations of giving towards philanthropy.

CONCLUSION

As examples in this paper illustrate, various philanthropic efforts attempt to create innovative social development programs that have positive impacts on the lives of their target groups. Yet, a major challenge to realize such an impact is the lack of measuring tools and initiatives. A key concern that has to be addressed with this regard is the deeply rooted attitude of Thai society that charity is the act of giving without the need or concern for anything in return. This mindset is a cultural and religious construct, originating in Thai traditions, and translating into the practice of giving as an end in itself, without expecting anything in return. Transforming this deeply engrained mindset will require changes amongst all actors of the charity-philanthropy sector in Thailand. From the corporate world, this will imply thinking of CSR and corporate charities differently. CSR programs will have to be seen as contributions to address social issues that add value to society, rather than specific events with little sustained impact for the beneficiaries. Accompanying this change will necessitate systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks that are utilized by the management. Such changes normally do not happen at mid-management level and thus, senior executives with the authority to implement the change will have to lead this transformation. How to incentivize the growing number of wealthy individuals to engage in philanthropy is a potentially interesting topic for Thai think-tanks, research institutes, and business schools to explore. Small charities and NGOs in Thailand will have to adapt in an ever-evolving funding ecosystem where competition is coming from new types of organizations such as social enterprises. Setting up concrete and measurable goals with accountability measures is a strategic investment that builds trust with existing and potential funders. Think-tanks and the media can play a critical role as public watchdogs for greater accountability and transparency in the religious charitable sector, which will reinforce the need for accountability within the non-religious sector as well. Prawase Wasi is a senior statesman and well-respected public health leader deeply involved in mobilizing support from the public sector as well as from civil society to influence national social policies such as the campaign for a national Universal Health Coverage Scheme. In mobilizing support across sectors towards a national cause, Prawase uses the analogy of “the triangle that moves the mountain” (Wasi, 2000, p. 3). The mountain signifies

an unsurmountable problem and the triangle symbolizes the three forces necessary to solve that problem: knowledge and relevant research, social movement, and political involvement (Wasi, 2000, p. 3). Applying Prawase's metaphor to the philanthropic sector in Thailand, the mountain is a combination of the challenges of changing mindsets, bringing together fragmented actors from different sectors, and rectifying weak accountability and the lack of public trust. The triangle will have to consist of 1) applying relevant knowledge, tools, and targeted research to better understand the sector in Thailand; 2) mobilizing partnerships to share this knowledge and best practices, especially in setting up accountability among key actors, such as well-established charities, large CSR programs, and new philanthropic agents; and finally, 3) the enacting of better policy, such as fiscal reform to create a broader base for charitable giving from both individuals and corporations, in addition to other incentives to encourage more giving to non-religious causes. Through a combination of simultaneous approaches, it may be possible to change the public's understanding of philanthropy and what distinguishes it from charity.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. Rosalia Sciortino for her invaluable advice and support.

Giving Trends in Myanmar: More Than Merit Making

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► Dove, C. (2017). Giving trends in Myanmar: More than merit making. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 205-222.

Myanmar, with a human development index ranking of 145 out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2016), has been given the prestigious title as the number one giving nation in the world for three years running (2014-2016) by Charities Aid Foundation, challenging the notion that giving is tied to wealth. Explanations for why this is the case tend to focus on the religious practices of Theravada Buddhism and merit-making. This explanation is only part of the picture, however, and does not account for the similarly high rates of giving by other religious groups in Myanmar or for the failing of other Buddhist nations to equal Myanmar's generosity. I will argue that the low levels of state investment in basic human welfare and the widespread deprivation in the country due to the long years of military rule, coupled with the lack of effective institutions to provide basic social welfare services, are equally strong motivators for charity. At the same time, I will demonstrate that giving trends in Myanmar—even those motivated by compassion or religious duty—are a response to immediate needs that are unmet by government or institutional support. For the vast majority of people, reliance on your neighbor is the only available insurance. Such charitable giving rarely extends to philanthropic giving, which addresses systemic and root causes of poverty rather than targeting symptoms. I provide explanations for the high level of charitable giving in Myanmar, looking at everyday examples of giving in Myanmar from both individuals and local businesses and considering the humanitarian disaster of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 as a case example.

Keywords: Charity; Cyclone Nargis; Giving Trends; Merit-Making; Myanmar



INTRODUCTION

Myanmar has a reputation for generosity. According to the *World Giving Index*, Myanmar has topped the list as the number one giving country in the world for the past three years. Developed by *Charities Aid Foundation*, this index creates a picture of generosity by measuring people's behavior in terms of charitable action, with a special focus on how frequently people help a stranger, donate money, and volunteer their time for charity. In addition to placing first for donating money to charity from 2014-2016, Myanmar placed first also for volunteering time and donating money in 2015, the first country to be placed at the top for two of the three ways of giving since 2010 (Charities Aid Foundation, 2015, p. 5). In the 2016 report they increased their overall score as a result of an increase in both volunteering time and helping a stranger (Charities Aid Foundation, 2016, p. 21).

Myanmar's achievement as the number one giving country in the world is all the more surprising in that Myanmar is one of Asia's poorest countries. The fact

that Myanmar, while ranking as one of the least developed countries in the world, can demonstrate such strong generosity and is, in fact, the leader of the world giving index, confounds conventional wisdom that assumes that people practice generosity out of their abundance. According to data from the *Charities Aid Foundation Giving Report 2016*, 91% of the people in Myanmar donated money during the survey month, yet the Asian Development Bank research suggests that one quarter of the population remains below the poverty line (UNDP, 2015). In other words, whether rich or poor, young or old, and across religious and ethnic lines, Myanmar people give money more regularly than anywhere else in the world. Similarly, Myanmar's excellence in giving is not shared by other ASEAN or Buddhist countries. Apart from Indonesia, there is neither any other ASEAN nor Buddhist country on this list. Additionally, the gap between Myanmar and the closest competitors for the title of most generous nation is wide. Countries ranked from number two through to number ten are within nine points of each other, whereas Myanmar is 16 points ahead of the nearest competitor, the Muslim nation of Indonesia. This data suggests that Myanmar generosity cannot be simply explained as an 'Asian' or 'Buddhist' practice. Ironically, only five of the G20 countries are in the top-ten list of countries in the 2016 World Giving Index (Charities Aid Foundation, 2016).

MOTIVATIONS FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

Brown & Wong (2009) provide a review of the economics literature and summarize two differing explanations for the motivations underlying charitable giving. The 'public goods' model is exemplified by giving based on an anticipated private return to some form of public good, where everyone can benefit (Sugden, 1984; Warr, 1982). In contrast, the 'private consumption' model arises when donors derive utility from the act of giving, often because the public approves of such giving, which may benefit the donor (Arrow, 1972). For example, conspicuous donations or the "look at me" motivation (Dawson, 1988; Guy & Patton, 1989) may signal wealth, thereby enabling donors to interact with people in higher socioeconomic strata, as such networks are advantageous (Glazer & Konrad, 1996). However, Andreoni (1990) notes that donors may also receive a "warm glow" (p. 464) from making charitable contributions if the well-being of others enters their own utility functions, even when there are no social benefits (Andreoni, 2015; Makoto & Kotani, 2011) to donors, and when the beneficiaries of charitable giving are not known to the donors. Research by Guy and Patton (1989) and Dawson (1988) found that individuals donate because of intrinsic reasons such as to enhance their self-esteem, to reap public gratification, and to gain satisfaction and fulfilment through meeting one's obligation to others.

Rose-Ackerman (1982, 1996) proposes that people derive utility from charity only if they personally donate. Complementary research in this area suggests that the utility gains from donating depend critically on the behavior of others. For example, Duncan (2004) argues that many individuals make charitable gifts only if their donations represent large proportions of the total received by a given charity, as a form of "heroism". By contrast, Sugden (1984) suggests that individuals are averse to "freeriding" and hence donate if others in their peer group have also given, even if the amounts involved are very small. Brown and Minty (2008) reviewed giving in the

United States after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and concluded that most donors were motivated neither by conspicuous giving for social recognition nor by opportunities to partake in ‘impact philanthropy’. Instead, they argue people donated to relief efforts precisely because so many others were also giving to the relief efforts, so they wanted to join the group giving movement and not lose face alongside their peers. Brown and Wong (2009) examined the relationships between news coverage of a major natural disaster and charitable giving for disaster relief, and found a positive relationship (the media factor) between event-driven news stories and levels of giving. Finally, tax incentives for giving can also provide institutional support and convenience for charitable giving.

The limitations of the research summarized above are clear: It is primarily focused on North America and does not consider the specific religious, historical, and community context in Myanmar, where these theories of motivation are only partially relevant. We can expect that the ‘warm glow’ from meeting obligations to others is a universal motivation and relevant to Myanmar, along with the theory of “group think”, as giving is a unifying characteristic of people in Myanmar. But more research is needed to understand the interconnectedness between theories and giving behavior. Media theories and concepts of utility, networking, face saving, and tax avoidance are not sufficient to explain the vast majority of givers in Myanmar. The question remains as to why are Myanmar people such generous givers.

CHARITY VERSUS PHILANTHROPY

Wealth is not new. Neither is charity. But the idea of using private wealth imaginatively, constructively, and systematically to attack the fundamental problems of mankind is new – John Gardner (Pistell, 2014)

Before we can answer the question about Myanmar’s generosity, we must first define the difference between charity and philanthropy. Those who practice philanthropy or charity often share the same motivation: a sense of compassion and a desire to use their resources to help others in need. Yet the method that philanthropic entities and charitable entities use to reach that outcome is different. Charity refers to the direct relief of suffering and social problems, while ‘philanthropy’ systematically seeks out root causes of these issues and endeavors to find a solution (Pistell, 2014). Charity is often the direct relief of immediate needs, such as food, shelter, and health care; demonstrates a compassionate response to dire circumstances; and tends to increase during natural disasters and emergency situations (Charities Aid Foundation, 2016). In contrast, philanthropy is private initiative for public good that focuses on the root cause of the suffering and seeks to find a solution that is not partisan, self-serving, or for private profit, although philanthropists may receive tax-deductible status for making donations. As John Rockefeller said, “the best philanthropy is constantly in search of the finalities – a search for a cause, an attempt to cure evils at their source” (Pistell, 2014). A useful analogy is to consider charity as providing someone a fish, while philanthropy teaches someone how to fish. However, charity and philanthropy should be considered as two sides to the same coin. One is not better than the other: it would be inhuman not to feed hungry children while working out a solution for

world hunger. Both charity and philanthropy are overlapping strategies that come from the same motivation and sense of compassion and that share the same goal. Philanthropy is not an excuse to avoid paying taxes or employing responsible business practices, so that you can ‘win your way to heaven.’ While this paper examines both charity and philanthropy in the Myanmar context, the primary expression of generosity in Myanmar is in the form of charity.

A BUDDHIST NATION AND IMPACT ON CHARITABLE GIVING

The essence of true charity is to give something without expecting anything in return for the gift. If a person expects some material benefit to arise from his gift, he is only performing an act of bartering and not charity . . . The act of true charity is wholesome, has no strings attached, and leaves both the giver and the recipient free (Venerable K. Sri. Dhammananda Maha Thera, KT Care Foundation)

Myanmar’s strong giving has often been associated with the importance of religion in the country. According to the 2014 census data, 87.9% of the population practice Theravada Buddhism, which drives high levels of giving through the practice of *Sangha Dana* or charity, with Christians making up 6.2%, Muslims 4.3%, animists 0.8%, and Hindus 0.5% (Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population, 2014). However, it would be relevant to note that while the 2014 Census was the first meaningful census in 30 years, the process managed to omit ethnicity statistics and large segments of people living in remote areas, and did not include the large Rohingya population (Callahan, 2017b). Charity is praised by the Buddha in many ways, and seen as “the stairway to celestial realm” (Ministry of Religious Affairs, n.d.). The daily practice of charitable deeds is part of the teachings of Buddhism, in which food, water, and flowers are offered at the monastery and to Buddhist images, and which includes material support, charity, and spiritual guidance to those in need. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, every pious Buddhist carries out the meritorious deeds of dispensing charity, observing morality, and practicing meditation. The motivation for giving to others is as important as what is given. Many Buddhists in Myanmar believe that in doing good they will receive good luck or merit. Donating or committing good deeds on one’s day of birth, or on the day of the week that one was born, is considered auspicious. For example, the *KT Care Foundation*, which was established by the Kyaw Thaug family, who successfully run the largest grocery store chain in Myanmar, created a small grants program that provides donations ten times a month in honor of each family member on their respective birthdays (KT Care Foundation, n.d.). Depending on their means, Buddhists will also make other donations, such as inviting the monks to their home and offering food, training their young sons as novice monks, special giving on birthdays and anniversaries to monasteries or private interests such as children’s homes or animal shelters, and donating materials to the monastery. While the amounts given may be small, they still have significant religious meaning and many people give daily, regardless of income level. Monks also collect daily food-alms by going house to house each morning in procession.

Indeed, monks in Myanmar are interconnected with the plight of the poor, and fulfil an important societal role by providing education, food, shelter, medical services, and comfort to the people. For example, monastic schools have been in existence in Myanmar since the 11th century. Using the same curriculum as the government schools but operating under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, these schools fill a significant gap in the education system by providing basic education and religious activities for children from needy families and orphans. Many operate as boarding schools for children from remote areas without access to schooling. The monastic schools are viable through heavy reliance on donations, community support, and a small amount of income generation and parental contributions. In the 2013-2014 academic year there were more than 1,400 monastic schools, providing primary and secondary education to more than 150,000 Myanmar children (Burnet Institute and Monastic Education Development Group, 2014, p. 12). By supporting the monasteries that provide education to children, the community members are able to live by the important Buddhist notion of *parahita*, which involves giving for the benefit or welfare of others.

In recent years, monks have also been more directly involved in political action. In a 2007 event widely publicized in the foreign media as the 'Saffron Revolution', thousands of monks took to the streets in non-violent resistance to protest the government's draconian decision to remove fuel subsidies. The monks turned their alms bowls upside down and refused alms from Burmese military generals, thus symbolically refusing to give the Buddha's blessings to them and making a strong political statement in a religiously devout nation. The military cracked down violently on the demonstrations, resulting in injuries and deaths as well as imprisonments and torture (Welford & Zieger, 2013). More recently, Buddhist nationalism and anti-Muslim hate speech have been promoted through radical monastic groups, with the Ma Ba Tha, who came to prominence in 2015 by rallying for laws that widely limit religious freedoms, such as requiring women to seek permission from township officials if they wish to change their religion. The leader of the group, Ashin Wirathu, has also incited violence against Muslims, and has a wide following among the majority Buddhist people. While these intolerant and violent views are at odds with the key tenants of Buddhism, the group enjoys widespread appeal in part because of their broader agenda to protect Buddhism against external threats and the propagation of Buddhist faith and institutions through organized religious and social activities in communities throughout Myanmar (Walton, 2017).

Clearly Buddhist religious practices are a contributing factor to Myanmar giving trends, but they still do not answer why Myanmar outscores neighboring Buddhist countries in such a dramatic fashion.

FAITH AND GIVING: EVERYDAY EXAMPLES OF GIVING

Between 2016 and 2017, I collected the following stories through first-hand interviews with 32 people living in Yangon, Shan State, Chin State, and Kayin State. Additional information was obtained from research reports, websites, and newspaper articles. These anecdotes, while not exhaustive, can provide insight into the motivation behind giving in Myanmar. The stories that follow give examples of how everyday people practice charity in daily life. In all cases, names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Ma Thida Tun is a 53-year-old woman from Mandalay who is married with two grown children. Both she and her husband trained as medical doctors but left medicine in the early 1990s to open a business. Money was tight, but her husband found success in the early 2000s and their economic situation improved over time. For this family, regardless of what they had, they practiced many acts of charity. These included giving alms to monks every day, donations to monastic schools, and celebrating significant events such as birthdays and other auspicious occasions by making donations. As the family has prospered, their giving has increased. They have built several new monasteries and supported the upkeep of other monastic buildings, as well as building pre-schools, elder care facilities, and a hospice for people living with HIV/AIDS. Ma Thida Tun notes that while her husband's family has always given alms to monasteries, it was her own mother's example of giving to social causes outside the monastery, such as providing food and school supplies to children, which also inspired her to give. She notes that, even as a young university student, she would save money out of her meager resources to buy eggs for a local children's home. Her reasons are intrinsic – to share her own resources and meet obligations to others (Ma Thida Tun, 20 October 2016).

Aye Myat Thanda is a 40-year-old woman who runs her own business in tourism in Yangon. Her father died when she was young, leaving her mother to provide for the family. Times were tough, but the changes in Myanmar and the growth of the tourism sector more recently have resulted in new opportunities for her. Every week, Ma Thanda gives money to monks on their alms collection. She also buys flowers to adorn her small Buddhist shrine in her apartment, and volunteers on Saturdays as an English teacher at a local monastic school. On auspicious occasions, she makes additional donations at monastic schools of both food and robes for the monks. The practice of giving is part of her daily life and culture. She speaks of her motivation to pay forward her opportunities, so others can also have a chance to make a better life for themselves (Aye Myat Thanda, 17 February 2017)

One cultural practice I recorded frequently was the tradition of celebrating birthdays by providing a special gift for others. One ten-year-old child attending an international school in Yangon received an end of year award for 'most charitable behavior' for celebrating her birthday by providing a special meal to the children in a monastic school. Yet she was puzzled by the recognition, as she notes this is common practice among her Myanmar peers. Another young office worker took vacation leave on her birthday to bring animal supplies to a local animal shelter. Within the workplace, I have observed that on staff birthdays, the 'birthday holder' will often purchase special treats or lunch for the office. Such is the example of a tradition that includes young and old as well as rich and poor..

Care for orphans is another theme that emerged through everyday stories. One forty-year-old woman shared that while she was an only child, her parents took in seven other children who were orphans. As she was the eldest child, once her studies were finished, she supported the seven adopted siblings for their school and university costs. Many of those interviewed had similar stories of taking care of children left orphaned by disease or disaster, either through directly adopting or through donations to monasteries for the care of children. In many of these cases, their response was inspired by compassion to respond to the needs of these children and to share resources.

The Christian pop singer Daw Chit Thu Wai, who is also a doctor, volunteered to help people in need following Cyclone Nargis, although she would not provide the details of her activities.

According to my Christian beliefs, it is said that ‘when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.’ That’s why I will not tell anything about it because we are not used to bragging about what we do for charity (Sandy, 2011).

Interviews in Kayin state with a group of Kayin Christians and with a Christian pastor from Chin State discussed their community practice of religious tithing on their income to the church, which then uses those funds for the social welfare needs of the people. Both spoke of providing financial and social support to the elderly, widows and orphans, and also supporting youth programs, as motivated by compassion but also in obedience to the teachings of the church.

Other religious minority groups in Myanmar, such as Muslims, also have a strong tradition of generosity known as *zakat*. This is a form of alms-giving taught as a religious obligation, and is at least 2.5% of income, with followers encouraged to give as they are able (see also Fauzia in this issue). As one of the five pillars of Islam, *zakat* is distinguished from charity in that it is taught as a religious obligation and not simply a voluntary gesture. While no data currently exists on *zakat* in Myanmar, it is understood to be significant by local people. For example, the displaced Rohingya population in Rakhine State has received food, shelter, water, and sanitation through *zakat* giving from local Muslims and private donors from the Middle East and Malaysia.¹ Interviews with four Muslim believers in Yangon shared stories of giving to the mosque and religious institutions. Islamic teaching includes almsgiving as a private obligation and seeking credit on earth would diminish from any credit obtained in heaven or in the next life. Asking for information on the effectiveness or impact of that gift then goes against the benevolence of the giver, as it is the individuals’ responsibility to give but ultimately *Allah* will determine the results. Based on research in Indonesia, Parvanova & Fauzia (2013) argues that Islamic giving will never be fully formalized or regulated, because of its origin in the “altruistic and reciprocal nature of people” and collective awareness and “concern for the welfare of others”, as expressed through the traditional practices of Muslims motivated mainly by their faith (Parvanova & Fauzia, 2013, p. 201). The practice of *zakat* contrasts with an institutional approach to philanthropy, in which large sums are given, a foundation is established, and a methodology is established to determine whether funds are achieving the stated purpose. The true amount of *zakat* giving globally will likely never be tracked in such a public display, as it would amount to the giver receiving his/her just award on earth and not in heaven.

Individual acts of charity have also led to collective action. In Yangon, a volunteer group, *Noble Heart*, provides free ambulance services for those affected by road accidents in the city. In 2015, a group of villagers set up a volunteer patrol on part of

¹ There is evidence of giving to religious organizations to support the Rohingya, but no data is available on the amount that reaches them directly in Myanmar.

what is known as the ‘death highway’, a stretch of highway from Yangon to Mandalay which saw more than 450 accidents in 2015, and has been the scene of more than 400 deaths since 2013 (“Conquering the road safety challenge”, 2016). Funded by private donations and with no government support, the goal is to find medical help for these victims of accidents, and decrease the number of unnecessary deaths on Myanmar’s poorly maintained roads. Providing emergency ambulance services to prevent unnecessary death and injuries was described as the mission for this service.

The *Free Funeral Service Society* (FFSS) was set up in 2001, and has grown from a handful of volunteers to 17 hearses and 340 volunteers—including 40 doctors—as well as 50 paid employees. They have supported more than 100,000 funerals since their inception. The *Thukha Clinic* provides free medical care to about 500 patients a day with a staff consisting of 50 specialists who volunteer (Thein, 2011). Notably, in 2006 the director of FFSS, the well-known actor U Kyaw Thu, was arrested for indirectly highlighting the problem of poverty in Burma by helping the poor to perform last rites and bury their dead (McDowell, 2009, p. 5). After this crackdown, however, the FFSS has flourished and has continued to expand their reach of services. The motivation is to give respect and dignity to the dead, and to ensure the giving of last rites as part of the person’s spiritual journey.

Similarly, in 1937 *the Muslim Free Hospital* was established in the colonial city of Rangoon as a small dispensary to care for the poor of Rangoon who had no other access to medical care, with the initial investment provided entirely by other Muslims. From the beginning, the hospital did not discriminate based on religion, ethnicity, or income, and today it is a 160-bed hospital, reaching 500 outpatients a day, and providing in-patient medical care, including surgery, psychiatric services, maternal services, and eye care (Thein, 2011). Muslims in Myanmar donate USD 400,000 a year to run the hospital, and patients pay what they can. If patients do not have money, they pay nothing. According to Tin Myo Win, a department head at the hospital who is himself Buddhist, the Muslim practice of *zakat*, or donating some of their income to charitable causes, is an important source of income for the hospital, along with paid-for treatments and international donations (MacNamara, 2013). Interestingly, this example demonstrates how donors can derive utility from the act of giving, as it is part of a good public strategy to demonstrate how the minority populations also bring benefits to the majority Buddhist population. Another Muslim businessman reported how he also attends and contributes to Buddhist ceremonies and community events in his town, as it is good public relations to be seen as contributing to majority interests and also to have good relations with the leaders of the monastery, who have considerable social and political capital in his small town.

In a small, remote village in north-western Shan State, a group of men have started a new ambulance service to transport sick patients to hospitals in well-equipped centers, thus decreasing avoidable deaths in the community due to the lack of medical care. They pooled their resources to purchase a van and fuel, and set up a mobile number for community referrals. There is no medical staff connected with the service, but volunteer drivers take sick patients to hospital in rotation. When asked, the group advised that even hospitals call them directly for transportation on a regular basis, which the group provides for free. There is no thought that this type of service should be reimbursed or even provided by the hospitals or

through some type of government funding, yet the group argues that by providing this service free of charge, they are making merit. To accept money or to have a formal arrangement with the hospitals would detract from the service mentality of the group (Thorfinn, 2015).

These collective initiatives are a direct response from volunteers who make up for the deficiencies in social services, which are chronically underfunded by the government. This same response is true for citizens of many countries, yet the scale and extent of daily response to the needs of the poor in Myanmar is striking, as is a lack of expectation that government will assist. In contrast to other developed and developing nations, where emergency services are common and medical care is accessible and available, even to the poor, Myanmar citizens charitably fill in the gap left by the lack of basic government services.

GIVING IN TIMES OF CRISIS: THE EXAMPLE OF CYCLONE NARGIS

The inadequacy of government services became apparent to the world in 2008, when a cyclone hit Myanmar, leaving over 140,000 documented dead, two million homeless, and significant human suffering. Cyclone Nargis was the worst natural disaster to hit Asia since 1991 (UNICEF, 2009). The ineffective government response has been well publicized and contrasted to the international tsunami of 2004, when governments and international aid agencies quickly responded. The autocratic government delayed the arrival of international emergency services and supplies for several weeks, resulting in unnecessary human suffering (Selth, 2008). Rescue workers reportedly faced harassment by government officials and some parts of the country remained accessible only by boat (Preston, 2008). In some cases, relief supplies were re-packaged bearing government labels, leaving charitable organizations to question whether they were helping to bolster support of the military junta (Brown & Minty, 2008, p. 6). The government treated aid as a tactic of the West in pursuit of its political agenda. These suspicions were amplified by efforts to use the humanitarian situation in Myanmar as part of the justification for UN Security Council action.

However, the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (2008) notes that the gravity of the situation brought the best out of the Myanmar people, who shared their wealth and whatever little they possessed. Given the late arrival and limited reach of relief agencies, local civil society organizations provided emergency support to cyclone victims. In the early weeks, aid that kept survivors alive was provided almost entirely by civil society organizations and private citizens, while local authorities often turned a blind eye to such unauthorized relief efforts. People gave generously, and Buddhist monks and other religious leaders made substantial contributions. The Burmese diaspora also gave generously. Many returned home to help in ways large and small. The recorded contributions reached USD 11.86 million, but since many donations were made anonymously and were not officially recorded, it is impossible to put a precise value on the amounts (Tripartite Core Group, 2008, p. 60).

The above example is consistent with the private consumption motivation for charitable giving suggested by Arrow (1972) and Steinberg (1987). We can infer that the average donation was relatively modest and that many members of the community gave, rather than just one or two large donors giving large amounts. Finally,

many donations were made without fanfare, suggesting that donors were motivated more by the ‘warm glow’ and perhaps the desire to do ‘the right thing’, rather than for socioeconomic recognition associated with publicly visible giving (Glazer & Konrad, 1996).

Ultimately the Burmese army (*tatmadaw*) also provided essential aid and services through the mobilization of servicemen for search and rescue operations, evacuations, camp construction, road clearance, and distribution of relief assistance. The business community also contributed substantially in both cash and kind and provided assistance in their areas of competence, such as the building support offered by large construction and engineering firms. The total value of their inputs was USD 68.13 million (Tripartite Core Group, 2008). Some companies received lucrative trade concessions from the junta in exchange for donations to the relief effort.

While the military government of that period regularly used overwhelming force to control the population, they were unable to exert complete control over the Nargis response, partly due to lack of ability or interest to perceived threat from particular segments of the population, and unenthusiastic compliance by the enforcers of regulations (McDowell, 2009). In fact, contributing to relieve the suffering of fellow citizens could be considered an act of civil disobedience, and could also be perceived as a way of demonstrating that the military does not have complete control. Throughout this period, faith-based charitable organizations continued to operate and large numbers of community-based organizations (CBOs) sprang up to deal with less political sectors, such as health and education. Well known political dissidents such as Ma Thida and Khin Zaw Win gave up involvement in explicitly political activities after Nargis to focus on humanitarian causes. The military government saw that local and international NGOs, as well as concerned citizens, could play a role in delivering services to a country chronically underserved by government; space was created for community organizations to spring to life and take action instead of waiting for government permission.

The Impact of the “Nargis Moment”

The impact of the Nargis moment was mixed. The five-year post-cyclone assessment by the World Bank (World Bank, 2014) studied how Cyclone Nargis, the subsequent aid efforts, and the evolving economic conditions affected social capital, the capacity for collective action, intra and inter-village relations, and relations between villagers and their leaders. Better-off families that sponsored religious activities before Nargis were no longer able to afford them, depriving villagers of an important venue through which to strengthen social cohesion between community members. Increased migration among villagers of working age and the need to work longer hours also left villagers with less time to socialize with their neighbors. The report noted the remarkable social strength of Delta villages as they responded to the emergency by helping each other through sharing food, shelter, and labor, building homes, and contributing to rebuilding village infrastructure such as water ponds, roads, and bridges. Aid was critically important in the aftermath of the cyclone, both to save lives and to provide people with a sense that they did not have to face the enormous challenges of recovering from the disaster alone. Much of the initial aid was local, civil society-driven,

and was highly beneficial to the affected villages. In about one-quarter of the villages, however, social relations were poor five years after Nargis due in part to the aid effort. In these villages, there was a noticeable lack of social cohesion. The participation of villagers in activities that had been traditionally communal, such as religious and village development activities, including renovation of roads, monasteries, and ponds, declined. While these activities continued, they were undertaken by smaller groups rather than the community as a whole (World Bank, 2014, p. 30).

There are a number of reasons for the initial strength in social capital. First, development resources from higher levels are scarce. This accentuates the importance of working together at the community level and of carefully prioritizing resources for public goods. Second, in the absence of a state or employer safety net, community members help each other in times of need, which was particularly evident in their response to Nargis. Traditions of reciprocity, evident across Myanmar and across the world, encourage people to help their community members. This distinction cuts across different ethnicities and religions, between genders, between the young and old, and between different income and livelihood type groups (Tripartite Core Group, 2008, p. 2)

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Trends in Government Revenue and Expenditures

The Myanmar government revenue collection provides inadequate resources for the public sector. The budget of Myanmar is financed by funds from four primary sources: taxation, revenues from natural gas, transfer of surpluses from State Economic Enterprises (SEEs) and other non-tax revenue (various government fees and charges). Myanmar tax revenue netted, until recently, 6-7% of GDP, compared to neighboring countries that collected a minimum 15% of GDP. Vietnam for example had revenues consistently in excess of 25% of GDP (Myanmar Development Research Institute/Center for Economic and Social Development & Crawford School of Public Policy, 2015).

Public tax revenue could be higher if military sponsored corruption did not skim off potential tax revenue earned from the lucrative extractive industries. There is well-documented evidence of lost revenues from a resource curse. The estimated value of the jade business in 2014 was USD 31 billion, of which only one billion in revenue went through legal channels (Dapice, 2016). This figure is half of the entire country's GDP, yet the local population sees little benefit (Global Witness, 2015). Myanmar, Iraq, Nigeria, and Venezuela are all examples of countries that encounter additional difficulties in equitable development as a result of rich natural resources. Jones (2014) and Dapice (2016) explain from a political economy perspective that the elite who control the natural resources become rich with little additional effort, since companies can be hired to drill and export, creating extreme wealth for the elite but little positive impact for the local community. Those with access to this wealth can ignore the rest of the population, creating intense and violent competition for control of mineral revenues and, therefore, power and wealth. Poorly taxed resource extraction has led to significant gaps in government services.

Self-Reliance in the Absence of a Welfare System

What tax revenue did come in was poorly spent. Myanmar's culture of self-reliance is a legacy of the military's indifference to the basic social welfare needs of the population, further reinforced by the current state counsellor's recent speeches that citizens should "muster courage and self-confidence" to take personal responsibility for their own and the nation's solutions and not expect government solutions (Callahan, 2017a). While data obtained from the World Bank (2013) demonstrates that the government is increasing spending on social welfare, defense spending still dominates the national budget, both as a percentage of GDP and as a percentage of total expenditure. According to World Bank figures, health spending rose from 0.2% to just over 1% of GDP from 2009 to 2013, with the increase largely targeting needed staff salary rather than improved services. In contrast, 4.3% of GDP went to the military (ESCAP, 2012).

These findings demonstrate that people used their own resources to provide essential services to those in need. Chronic underfunding of healthcare, education, welfare, and social services have left many gaps that are filled by volunteers giving charitably to meet immediate needs. Government spending on the social sectors is strikingly low by international standards and the lowest in ASEAN. Philanthropic giving, to address the root causes of these issues, is not yet significant.

A GIVING CULTURE AMONG LOCAL BUSINESSES

Myanmar as an emerging market provides many new opportunities for businesses to enter and engage in markets, and in philanthropic endeavors, creating both new job opportunities and a middle class. Research conducted by Welford and Zieger (2013) highlights that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is mainly understood as a philanthropic and fashionable concept, but there is little understanding of CSR in terms of strategic alignment. For example, the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), formed under the Myanmar Investment Law as a government-appointed body to approve foreign business investment in the country, places little emphasis on creating tax measures, disclosure and reporting requirements, the inclusion of social and environmental criteria, and public recognition incentives. This is despite the MIC stated objective to "deeply emphasize on social impact" for companies looking to invest in Myanmar. Widger (2015) identifies CSR in Myanmar as a strategy of 'schoolbooks and spectacles', with a focus on the immediacy of the gift but rarely on the causes of poverty. Companies give gifts of schoolbooks, meal to orphanages or homes for the elderly, and medical equipment or glasses for those who cannot afford them. By doing so, companies participate in the redistributive economy, where the spoils of corporate success are shared with those less fortunate.

New domestic foundations have begun to proliferate in Myanmar. Several large Myanmar companies have established their own foundations within the company brand. The *Kanbawza (KBZ) Group* was established in 1994 and controls two airlines, the country's largest private bank, and lucrative jade and gem mining concessions. In 2008, they created the KBZ Foundation which focuses on providing clean water, sanitation, education, and youth development. According to their website, the KBZ

Brighter Future Foundation has spent more than USD 105 million over the past twenty years on charitable giving, although critics note that this is a small amount compared to the vast amount of money KBZ has received through illicit trade in gems and jade. Charitable donations may be part of the new quest for legitimacy in Myanmar. Another large corporate, *Capital Diamond Star Group*, began work in the 1960s as a small trading outfit and now is an international company spanning multiple sectors with more than 7,000 staff. Nevcan Coban, Senior Manager, Group Strategy and Business Development, while presenting at the Asian Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility Conference, 2016, in Naypyidaw, stated that the company has the desire to “give back, with less emphasis on charity and the writing of cheques and more on shared value creation through active engagement in projects that benefit both local farmers and businesses”. Their community website lists examples, such as a high school built in Mandalay; health clinics and donated medicines; rural development supported through building roads and providing water wells; contributions to monasteries and the operation of several contract farming initiatives with local farmers (Capital Diamond Star Group, n.d.). They see business opportunities behind social problems, and see themselves using their business acumen and resources to innovate and find business solutions to poverty (Asian Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility, 2016).

Serge Pun, chairman, *SPA Group*, Myanmar, and his brother, Martin Pun, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, *Yoma Strategic Holdings*, are considered standard bearers of responsible business practices in Myanmar. They described their approach to philanthropy at the Asian Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility, 2016, as “a rights-based approach, in which we create innovative programs, prototypes and can achieve scale, with a responsible business model that pays living wages, taxes and provides work with dignity.” They emphasize a ‘triple bottom line’ for business that includes impact on their people/staff, the environment, and profit. Their CSR programs respond to emergency response situations with relief supplies, champion inclusive approaches for working with clients who are HIV positive, and provide responsible business workshops and practical support. Mr. Serge Pun has hired 185 Burmese repatriates in his business, who returned to Myanmar motivated by a desire to be part of the recent changes and to help the country advance. Anecdotal evidence suggests that SPA’s experience is similar to others. Across all sectors, there are repatriates returning to work in Myanmar, often with a pay cut, bringing back with them education and work experience from abroad as well as cultural and language knowledge (Asian Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility, 2016). While there is a lack of research in this area, it would be interesting to track the giving habits of Burmese expatriates, including remittances to Myanmar and their giving habits in their host countries, in order to understand the factors that influence their generosity.

The KT Company was formed in 1950 and the family began the KT Care Foundation in 2008, in response to Cyclone Nargis. The Foundation began with handouts but has now moved from individual donations to supporting specific causes, such as health and education services, and emergency preparedness and relief services. They also run a grants program for community based organizations providing social services. Dr. Hannah Kyaw Thauang, who is the daughter of the founder of the KT Company, notes that the foundation is an expression of the family’s priority on education, and over time has shifted from solely looking at the benefits to the community to looking at

mutual benefits of doing business, such as job creation and economic growth. With local language and cultural knowledge, connections with local and international networks, and their understanding of best practices from around the world, the KT Care Foundation sees itself as an expression of their family values, with a long-term vision and increased credibility in the community through giving back. Their culture of giving permeates both business and personal relations, as they use their wealth to respond to the institutional failure in Myanmar. This type of family-led foundation approach comprises 21% of all philanthropic giving in Asia and is growing (Mahmood, 2013).

The practice of ‘crony capitalism’ has resulted in the wealth of the country being in the hands of fewer than twenty families, who became rich with help from the military dictatorship (Ford, Gillan, & Thein, 2016). These families are trying to rehabilitate their images, quietly bringing sons and daughters into the business and consolidating a second-generation elite, creating a ‘crony capitalism turned philanthropist’ situation. For example, Tay Za, considered one of the regime’s top cronies because of his favor with the military government, controls an empire spanning oil and gas, minerals, drugs, timber, and guns. Yet his son Pye Phyo Tayza claims that “everything is different for [Tay Za] now. He is doing a lot of foundation work, and more contributions for society. Less greed” (Szep, 2012). Such statements may represent a change in strategy in an attempt to whitewash ‘black’ money, rehabilitate his public image, and retain influence and legitimacy. One way of looking at these business examples is to consider how much is motivated by the reasons discussed earlier, or whether it is driven by profit. More work needs to be done to compare the giving patterns of responsible businesses and crony businesses and the motivations for each type of giving.

Risks of Private Sector-led Philanthropy

While giving by the people is exemplary, the weak Myanmar state has not developed processes and accountability. As elsewhere, Myanmar must build trustworthy institutions, good regulations, open and transparent organizations, and strong governance so that people can continue to give easily and with confidence that their donations are being used for the maximum benefit. It is this task – building strong state institutions and removing the drudgery of life – which is the challenge for government. Similarly, there is the possibility that those who give the most have the greatest influence and the ability to write public policy, as in corporate America. We must ask whether these individuals are most suited for this task, and whether they are motivated by the cause or by other factors. There is a risk that private funders may determine the future of health care, education, and vocational skills training in Myanmar and become an agent of civic inequality, in which more voice is given to those with power (Callahan, 2014). With the increase in ‘high net-worth individuals’ in Asia (and Myanmar), when will a Bill Gates appear in Myanmar, and will he/she be concerned with political, business, or social interests? Philanthropy cannot be an excuse for tax evasion, or a rationale for not following responsible businesses practices that respect human dignity and basic rights. Likewise, the Burmese government is not used to working in partnership – it operates on the principle that people obey what it says. Old habits, including a military culture, are still ingrained in the new government, as the 2008 constitution guarantees 25% of all seats in parliament to the military. How

can the focus be on inclusive growth and making good choices that do not impinge on the rights of others? This cannot be accomplished through self-regulation. The state is the trustee of public good, and strong institutions for social good and inclusive growth are needed.

CONCLUSION

The ‘urge to give’ is a universal human trait and people in Myanmar, like their fellows across the globe, have multiple motivations to give. They are motivated by their religious convictions; the urge to give back to the community; to pay it forward in return for advantages that they have received, and simply from compassion to help those in need. In the absence of any government safety net, people in Myanmar rely on community connections and relationships to do their best for one another and respond to basic needs in difficult times, redistributing wealth.

With such a weak tax base and major demands on limited resources, there is no doubt that Myanmar will continue to rely on volunteering, charitable giving, and increased philanthropic giving by individuals and businesses. As the economy develops and wealth increases, it will be interesting to see whether the strength of giving in Myanmar will remain consistent. As the state increases its revenues through taxation, and is expected to provide more basic services, will the current sense of responsibility and compassion be replaced by an expectation that government will take on more responsibility? Or will people give even more as their wealth and income increases? The state can support this social transformation through regulations that recognize traditional forms of giving and create an environment where charities can demonstrate their effectiveness.

Myanmar needs peace, development, and democracy, all at the same time. The compassion of the Myanmar people toward their own people is unparalleled and, as the most generous country in the world, more research is needed to understand the factors, both religious and otherwise, which contribute to their shared sense of humanity, in order not to simply do better and give more, but to change the roots of poverty and inequality in communities all across Myanmar – one gift at a time.



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Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, Islamization, and Social Justice

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► Fauzia, A. (2017). Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, islamization, and social justice. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 223-236.

This article discusses the potentials and constraints of social justice philanthropy in Indonesia in the context of two trends – of growing Islamization and modernization. It employs interviews and recent observations together with survey data. Although the challenges facing social justice philanthropy remain immense, the pathways to development have been created; pathways through which the gap that exists between faith-based philanthropy and its secular counterparts may become smaller. Looking at growing philanthropization in the last 15 years and the pre-existing popularity of the concept of social justice among the population, could social justice and developmentalism may become the future of Islamic philanthropy in the country? The author argues that modernization and Islamization encourage the practice of philanthropy, but that they do not necessarily contribute to the development of a philanthropy that focuses on social justice. The modernization of the philanthropy sector has shown scattered pictures of development into a form of social justice philanthropy, which remains small but nevertheless encouraging.

Keywords: Development; Indonesia; Islamic Philanthropy; Islamization; Social Justice



INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 21st century the situation in Indonesia showed a kind of fever of Islamic philanthropy, which added to the existing local and Western private foundations. After two decades, the growing enthusiasm toward Islamic philanthropy in the country is unlikely to fade in the near future. It is a development that rose steadily out of the economic crisis of 1997 that preceded the fall of the New Order and that was later supported by the movement for political reformation and democratization (*Reformasi*). Various Islamic philanthropy organizations were established in the course of this process. It obtained another endorsement from the Islamization movement, via laws and other forms of legislation. The enthusiasm was further encouraged by the general Islamization that has been taking place in the country (Ricklefs, 2008, 2012). It received an unintended and painful ‘blessing’ from a series of large-scale disasters, from the 2004 Aceh tsunami through to earthquakes in 2007. And then finally, it earned high attention from the Indonesian government, although, whether this could be interpreted as positive or negative remains an open question. The government has recently been trying to embody *zakat* (almsgiving) into its development agenda,

doi 10.14764/10-ASEAS-2017-2-6

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something that the Suharto government had tried but failed since the end of 1960s in their efforts to incorporate Muslim charity with modernization and development. Additionally, Western private foundations and international development agencies have put in efforts to endorse and support the field. Since 2002, the Ford Foundation has supported the development of philanthropy with a social justice approach and purpose, for both secular and Islamic foundations and organizations.¹ Since 2004, the Australian organization AusAID has entrusted the two largest Muslim organizations, *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, with the tsunami disaster relief in Aceh. Later, these organizations strengthened their humanitarian and philanthropic divisions. In the last two years, international development agencies from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have tried to assist in encouraging the direction of the Islamic philanthropy sector into development, including recent schemes for poverty reduction and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Noor & Pickup, 2017; Pickup, 2017).

Muslim philanthropy to benefit the public good has attracted many sectors and actors, from Muslim organizations and the state, to corporations and development agencies, each according to their own purposes (Fauzia, 2013; Latief, 2010, 2014). The potential amount of *zakat*, *sedekah* (donation), *waqf* (endowment), and other charitable forms have been mentioned in many research papers, conferences and reports (Abubakar & Bamualim, 2006; Kurniawati, 2004). The *National Development Planning Agency* and the *National Zakat Board* (BAZNAS) calculated the recent annual potential of *zakat* collection in Indonesia ranging from IDR 100 billion (USD 7.6 million) to IDR 286 trillion (USD 22 billion) (The National Zakat Board Center of Strategic Studies, 2016; Firdaus, Beik, Irawan, & Juanda, 2012). These do not include non-*zakat* donations and *waqf* assets. However, the de facto *zakat* collection by registered organizations is small and accounts for IDR 3.7 trillion in 2015 (The National Zakat Board Center of Strategic Studies, 2016, p. 9).

The concept of *social justice* has always been of interest to Indonesian scholars, starting with Hamka's *Keadilan Sosial dalam Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), published in 1966 and reprinted many times in almost every decade until recently in 2015. The concept was usually linked to the economy (Mubyarto, 1995) and to the movements of Islam (Madjid, 1987/2008), including to practices of Islamic philanthropy (Mas'udi, 1993). Sayyid Qutb's book, *Al-'adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* (Social Justice in Islam), first published in 1949 and later translated into Indonesian language, has been the strongest inspiration for Indonesian scholars and activists on the idea of social justice. Apart from scholarly and activist discourse, the concept of social justice is rooted in the popularity of the state ideology *Pancasila*, especially its last principle.² *Pancasila* has been taught at schools and read out loud by students at their weekly school assemblies. In addition, it seems that experiences of injustices since the 19th century have encouraged the idea of social justice.

1 The author was team leader of a research project on Philanthropy for Social Justice in Muslim Societies (including Indonesia), led by Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic University Jakarta from 2002 to 2004, funded by the Ford Foundation.

2 The five principles of Pancasila are: 1) the belief in one God, 2) a just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) democracy under the wise guidance of representative consultations, and 5) social justice for all the peoples of Indonesia.

Research on Islamic philanthropy for social justice by Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University conducted in 2003 (later referred to as the ‘2003 survey’) finds that philanthropy has been practiced in a traditional way, but has certain potential for a social justice approach and aim (Abubakar & Bamualim, 2006). Following this study, a conceptual study on social justice philanthropy supports its potential practice in Muslim societies (Hasan, 2007). A possible transformation of the charity approach to social justice has been discussed by Fernandez (2009) and by the author (Fauzia, 2010a, 2010b). Looking at growing *philanthropization* in the last 15 years and the pre-existing popularity of the concept of social justice among the population, social justice and development may become the future of Islamic philanthropy in the country. But is one decade-and-a-half sufficient to show a convincing picture of the growth of social justice philanthropy? And what may contribute to or hinder its development? This article discusses the potentials and constraints of social justice philanthropy in the context of those twin forces of growing Islamization and modernization in Indonesia, focusing on the dynamics in the period from 2000 to 2017. The article defines Islamic philanthropy organizations as nonprofit entities which aim to provide public good and assistance for poor communities, either through organizations or directly to individuals, and which are based on Islamic values or having Islamic aims. The analysis for this article deliberately excludes mass organizations, except for sections within the organizations that clearly do fundraising, charitable management, and the redistribution of assistance. Both Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have smaller organizations, called *LazisNU* and *LazisMU* respectively, that collect and redistribute *zakat*, and also organizations that work on relief assistance. Furthermore, this article does not include *waqf* because they have a different character in terms of managing charitable resources, although theoretically *waqf* is regarded as having strong potential for social justice philanthropy.

In Indonesia, the practice of philanthropy has transformed over time and the term has different nuances. This article acknowledges the conceptual difference between *charity* and *philanthropy*. Whereas charity is understood as a service delivery for a short-term assistance, philanthropy is more of a long-term project that targets the root problems creating inequality and poverty (Casey, 2016). Since the difference between the terms is not seen clearly in practice in Indonesia, the term philanthropy is used here. Philanthropic organizations receive their main resources from donors (either from family donation, corporations, institutions, or individuals). They manage these resources and then (re)distribute them to beneficiaries, either directly or through other organizations.

This article uses observations of organizations as well as interviews.³ To account for the limitations of these observations, it refers to data from a 2003 survey on understanding, opinion, and practices of Islamic philanthropy at the national level (Abubakar & Bamualim, 2006). The author finds that the modernization of the philanthropy sector has shown scattered pictures of development into a form of social justice philanthropy, which remains small but nevertheless encouraging. The author argues that modernization and Islamization encourage the practice of philanthropy

3 The author has been researching Islamic charitable organizations since 2002. Interviews used for this article have been conducted since January 2016 as part of a research project on Islamic philanthropy networks in Southeast Asia at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (NUS).

but that they do not necessarily contribute to the development of a philanthropy that focuses on social justice. In discussing this, the article is divided into four main sections: 1) Islamization, modernization, and social justice in philanthropy, 2) modernization of the organization and programs, 3) examples of social justice practices, and 4) potentials and constraints of social justice philanthropy, and 5) some concluding remarks.

ISLAMIZATION, MODERNIZATION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN PHILANTHROPY

The history of philanthropy in the post-*Reformasi* period reveals a picture of modernization and Islamization. *Islamization* can be found in the deepening use of Islamic sources, the involvement of a greater number of Islamic organizations, the efforts toward more revivalist or conservative interpretations of certain practices, and the efforts to implement of *zakat* as an individual tax obligation to the state. Islamization is “a process of deepening commitment to standards of normative Islamic belief, practice and religious identity. Those standards are subject to contestation among groups and individuals” (Ricklefs, 2012, p. 516). The influence of Islamization has also increased charitable activities within Salafi networks from the Middle East to Indonesia. However, those activities are not as large as it has been assumed, and are exceeded by donations from local Muslims (Jahroni, 2015). *Modernization* in the practice of philanthropy manifests itself in the use of modern forms of organization, modern technologies, and a modern model of ‘rational thinking’ in the collection, organization, and distribution of various forms of charitable giving. Both Islamization and modernization have become imbedded in the recent, growing development of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia.

Among Islamic organizations, the term philanthropy was new and was introduced through advocacy and the research program *Philanthropy for Social Justice* in 2002. Acceptance of this term and concept was not easy as it was regarded as secular and Western. However, to date, the term has been widely used, including by Islamic newspapers (such as *Republika*) and by *zakat* organizations. The adjective ‘social’ when applied to justice endorses the acceptance of the term philanthropy. However, as this article later shows, the common understanding of the term among philanthropy organizations varies and there have been varied local adaptations.

The practice of social justice philanthropy developed in the US as a continuation of the move from charity to philanthropy, and the move toward effective giving that endorses social change through intervention in the root causes of social problems (Anheier & Leat, 2006; Hunsaker & Hanzi, 2003; Rabinowitz, 1990). The *National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy* (NCRP) defines social justice philanthropy as “the practice of making contributions to nonprofit organizations that work for structural change and increase the opportunity of those who are less well-off politically, economically and socially” (Hunsaker & Hanzi, 2003, p. 6). This article follows the NCRPs definition but adjusts it to Indonesian and Islamic contexts. Islamic philanthropy for social justice works in terms of long-term grantmaking, social change, and inclusive giving. The 2003 survey, led by the author, did not only endorse giving for structural change and increase the opportunity of the weak, minority, and discriminated groups among society, but also highlighted the impartiality of giving without

discrimination with regard to groups, gender, ethnicity, and religion. These values were taken from the progressive understanding of Islamic teachings. The growing trend of modernization and Islamization in the last two decades needs an assessment of how the seeds of social justice philanthropy grew and to which direction these trends in Islamization and modernization stir the practice of philanthropy.

MODERNIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Philanthropy organizations have modernized since *Reformasi* in three important ways: 1) legal reform, 2) reform in management, and 3) reform in programs. The reformation period endorsed a legal reform related to philanthropy with the issuance of the Zakat Management Law No 38 in 1999 – later amended with Law No 23 in 2011, the Foundation Law No 16 2001 (amended in 2004), and the Waqf Law No 41 in 2004. Muslim philanthropic organizations crystallized into three main types. First, *zakat* organizations, these are organizations that focus on the collection and distribution of *zakat* and that are supposed to register under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the National Zakat Board (BAZNAS). There are state-based *zakat* foundations (like BAZNAS) and community-based *zakat* foundations (like *Lembaga Amil Zakat* or LAZ).⁴ These comply with the Zakat Law, even though they also manage non-*zakat* donations. Second, there are charitable and humanitarian organizations. These focus on the collection of non-*zakat* donations, they report to the Ministry of Social Welfare and are registered under the Foundation Law. The third type includes *waqf* foundations and bodies. They comply with the *Waqf Law* and they mainly manage *waqf* assets. These three types may also be legally registered as foundations or mass organizations, therefore complying with the Foundation Law or the Mass Organization Law. Additionally, there are *zakat* committees, or temporary committees working to collect *zakat* in mosques, Islamic schools, and neighborhood associations.⁵ The three types of organizations have been endorsed to become modern in nature through laws and other government regulations, with expectations that they could work in a more effective and accountable way – not necessarily aiming for social justice. The move has been relatively successful for the non-*zakat* and *zakat* organizations, which as a result have more potential for social justice philanthropy.

The second reform is on the level of management. The adoption of modern management leads Islamic philanthropy organizations to use banking systems, hire full-time professional staff, improve organizational capacities, implement transparency and accountability principles, and have fundraising divisions. There has been a positive environment to do financial audits and publish reports, to provide an equal access for men and women, to do public fundraising, and offer the best service and programs to obtain public trust. The organizations also adjust to modern management by referring to contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings, for example, on the acceptance of banking systems that were previously regarded as unlawful

4 The total number of BAZNAS – from national, provincial, to districts – is 549 (Decree Director General for Guidance of Islamic Community No 499/2016). The approximate number of community *zakat* organizations – according to the General Secretary of Zakat Forum – is 231 (Amin Sudarsono, 28 August 2017).

5 The *zakat* committees at mosques approximately equal the number of mosques in the country, namely 731,095 (Langkah Strategis Meningkatkan Kualitas Masjid, 2017).

(*haram*) by some *ulama* (Islamic scholars) and organizations. The more modern the organization, the more it is open to women and to modern interpretations of Islamic teachings on philanthropy.

The third reform concerns programs. Most Islamic philanthropy organizations have expanded their activities into educational, health, disaster relief, economy, and socio-religious programs. Some leading organizations, such as *Dompot Dhuafa*, have created divisions for advocacy, provide grants for research and the publication of journals and books, and run research and training institutes on *zakat* management. *Dompot Dhuafa* also supports anti-corruption programs, advocacy for victims of evictions, and campaigns for environmental conservation. Following problems related to migrant workers, *Dompot Dhuafa* established a Migrant Institute and a branch in Hong Kong to provide assistance for female migrant workers (Abilawa, 3 February 2016) (see also Latief, 2014; also see this issue). These programs lead to the enhancement of practices of social justice philanthropy. This programmatic reform has broken the strong tradition of *zakat* giving, which is usually only for purposes related to religion and restricted to Muslims. Modern philanthropy organizations provide important means for the gradual inclusion of social justice in philanthropy practices. Traditional charity may also have a social justice value, for example, giving without discrimination and giving to underprivileged groups. The non-organized character of traditional giving, however, tends to keep social justice values low so that it could not change into effective and strategic social change. While modernization, especially programmatic expansion, has developed well, Islamic philanthropy organizations still keep traditional charitable activities in their programs, such as giving food and money to orphans, providing food for fast-breaking during Ramadan, and providing cash for Islamic preachers. In this respect, how organizations define social justice differs from one to another, as can be seen below.

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY

This section discusses examples of social justice philanthropy developed by Islamic philanthropy organizations and looks at the contexts from which these ideas and practices come. The first example discusses the establishment of non-*zakat* organizations, while the second and third show efforts for social justice philanthropy based on the *Indonesia Humanitarian Alliance for Myanmar* and the *World Zakat Forum*.

Establishment of Non-Zakat Organizations

As mentioned previously, there are charitable and humanitarian organizations which do not focus on *zakat*. This type of organization has flexibility in dealing with fundraising and managing donations that follow general regulations and not strict Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) on *zakat*. Such organizations offer greater potential for social justice philanthropy.

One example is the *Yasmin Foundation* which was founded by the intellectual Chaidar Bagir, an expert on Muslim philosophy and Sufism. *Yasmin* was an abbreviation for *Yayasan Imdad Mustad'afin*, focusing on empowering the poor. In 2016, it changed its brand name into *Amal Khair Yasmin* and became a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program of another of Bagir's institutions, namely *Mizan*

Publisher, which is known as a progressive Islamic publisher. Yasmin has a School Resource Centre, an Autis Therapy Centre, a health advocacy program, a second hand store, and many other activities. In early 2017, it advocated against hate speech and provided advice for polite communication, which seems to respond to social media hate speech against a Christian Chinese governor of Jakarta (Belajar Bicara Sopan Santun, 2017). For Yasmin, social justice means to give – not only to Muslims – and to appreciate minorities.

Philanthropy organizations that are similar to Yasmin are few in number. They are mostly founded by progressive Muslim intellectuals. Another example is the *Social Trust Fund (STF)*.⁶ Established in 2012, STF is founded and supported by academics of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. Learning from the Ford Foundation and philanthropy in other countries, STF's advocates for 'philanthropy for social justice and peace' that promotes equality and diversity, but adapted to an Indonesian Muslim context (Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, 2013). It aims to provide opportunities for the less advantaged, regardless of their religious or ethnic background, in order that they can have better access to education and welfare. Its grants and activities include scholarships for schools in remote areas (in the 'Outer Islands') and peace scholarship grants for Muslim and Christian children in conflict zones (Social Trust Fund UIN JKT, 2014). It offers advocacy programs for empowering civil society and the philanthropy movement, such as supporting judicial reviews of the Zakat Law. STF's views reflect progressive Islam, as it has been influenced by Muslim scholars from Syarif Hidayatullah University. As seen from the above activities, STF advocates for giving without discrimination as well as for the support of minority groups, peace and religious harmony, and long-term development programs.

Although having the same Islamic values, these two examples represent a different cultural tradition than *zakat* organizations. They follow a more humanistic form of Islam, which avoids 'political Islam'. This position differs from many *zakat* organizations that approach their beneficiaries solely as Muslims and are therefore relatively close to political Islam and *dakwah* (Islamic propagation) movements.

Indonesian Humanitarian Alliance for Myanmar

The *Indonesian Humanitarian Alliance for Myanmar* (AKIM – *Aliansi Kemanusiaan Indonesia untuk Myanmar*) was created in response to the humanitarian crisis concerning ethnic Rohingyas in Rakhine State, Myanmar. The escalation of the conflict in October 2016 and in August/September 2017 resulted in more than 500,000 Rohingyas fleeing as refugees to Bangladesh.⁷ Developed in early 2017 as a collaboration of Islamic philanthropy organizations and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the alliance has accepted the minister's policy on 'soft diplomacy', which is based on mutual respect and does not interfere in another country's domestic affairs (Tomy Hendrajati, 30 November 2016). AKIM's approach is to "give to the people in need for

6 The author is one of the founders of this organization.

7 The crisis arose from a complexity of ethno-religious conflict between Rohingya-Muslims and Rakhine-Buddhists, and a conflict between the military junta and militant Islam, based on long-term discrimination and the negligence of the Myanmar government to recognize the Rohingya minority as citizens of Myanmar.

both societies, without any discrimination” – a policy that was endorsed by Minister Marsudi (22 January 2017) and articulated by a limited number of organizations.

This ‘soft diplomacy’ succeeded in making this alliance the only organization welcome to carry out humanitarian aid in Rakhine State. In January 2017, AKIM inaugurated two schools (renovated by one member of the alliance) (Kemenlu, 2017), and delivered aid given by the government (ten container trucks of food packages and sarongs). The alliance plans to help both Muslim and Buddhist refugees in Rakhine State in four areas: education (such as through schools and libraries), health (through medical training), economy and livelihood, and relief for two years at the cost of more than USD 2 million. The long-term development and inclusive approach made by this alliance could be part of a social justice approach.

AKIM is worth mentioning for two reasons: First, it could persuade a number of Islamic philanthropy organizations – some from conservative backgrounds – to bring assistance not only to Muslim-Rohingya’s but also to Rakhine-Buddhist refugees. In fact, some of the money contributed for this project is *zakat* money (see the next section on *zakat* to non-Muslims), which means that they accept a more progressive interpretation and an inclusive approach to distribute *zakat* money also to non-Muslim beneficiaries. Second, it marks an acceptance of a long-term development program focusing on building peace rather than a short-term ‘hit and run’ approach that most organizations tend to engage in (see the low percentage of giving to long-term purposes in the next section).

The alliance has survived in the face of high politicization, from provocations of fundraising without clear objectives by individuals and unregistered organizations, as well as against reactions of hatred (such as those from radical organizations of the *Islamic Defender Front* (FPI) who launched a war, declared as a *jihād*, against the Rakhine Buddhists) (Hodge & Rayda, 2017; Kami, 2017). Despite strong conservative and non-inclusive harassment, the alliance maintained its position. Between March and August 2017, its membership decreased from 14 to 11 organizations but increased to 25 organizations later in September. Today, there is increased public support for the alliance, including from the Zakat Forum.⁸ It remains premature to claim success for this alliance as an example of an inclusive and social justice practice of philanthropy, as we need to wait for a few years to confirm this. However, the project displays an early effort in a social justice approach toward giving that commentators need to take into account.

World Zakat Forum

The World Zakat Forum (WZF) is a network that consists of organizations, individual practitioners, and academics that together aim to enhance the practice of *zakat* worldwide. It was established in 2010, initiated by the Dompot Dhuafa and

⁸ The 11 organizations that signed the commitment are *Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre*, *Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim – Nahdlatul Ulama*, *PKPU Human Initiative*, *Dompot Dhuafa*, *Rumah Zakat*, *Dompot Peduli Ummat – Daarut Tauhiid*, *LAZIS Wahdah*, *Laznas Lembaga Manajemen Infaq* (LMI), *Aksi Cepat Tanggap*, *Lazis Dewan Da’wah Islamiyah Indonesia*, and *Social Trust Fund – UIN Jakarta*. More new members include four from social and humanitarian organizations, and ten *zakat* organizations.

supported by the National Zakat Board or BAZNAS (Purwakananta, 1 March 2017). The forum later received support from leading *zakat* organizations, including from organizations in Malaysia. It aims to be an institutional platform to support the further movement of *zakat* for the welfare of the *ummah* and “the glorification of Islam” (World Zakat Forum, 2017). It has held regular meetings to promote and enhance collaboration in *zakat* for poverty reduction. Previous conferences and meetings aimed at the engagement of practitioners, individuals, and *zakat* organizations from many parts of the world, and tried to endorse progressive interpretations of *zakat*, which still remains a big challenge.

Between 14 and 16 March 2017, the WZF held its fourth general assembly conference in Jakarta entitled “Strengthening the Role of *Zakat* as a Global Instrument to Eradicate Poverty” (World Zakat Forum International Conference, 2017) which was attended by about 300 participants (mainly from the national board of *zakat*) and representatives from 19 countries. Its local host was the National Board of Zakat. It held a plenary session on *zakat* and SDGs, and it signed a cooperation agreement with the UNDP and the National Development Planning Agency on *zakat* for development. Although the forum remains exclusive for Muslims and those who want to use *zakat* as a weapon against unbridled capitalism, liberalism, and for reinforcing solidarity among Muslim nations, its platform is quite open for collaboration with international development agencies, such as the UNDP. It somehow follows the schemes of international agencies in the question of how *zakat* could be used effectively for development – specifically for poverty eradication – and fits with goals for sustainable development. The move toward *zakat* for development is made possible through the leadership of BAZNAS and Dompot Dhuafa. This move is in accordance with the value of social justice philanthropy. For *zakat* organizations, agreement on the tools of SDGs and the development agenda indicates a big leap that may advance the agenda of social justice. Although it is not clear how this forum could further endorse *zakat* organizations toward a social justice agenda, it shows a path toward the transformation of *zakat* for development aims.

POTENTIALS AND CONSTRAINTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY

The examples above reveal the potential for the further development of philanthropy of social justice. This, to some extent, echoes several findings of the 2003 survey. First, looking at social capital and the principle of social justice, the survey finds that Muslims in Indonesia have the potential to develop social justice philanthropy. It finds that more than 65% of Muslim respondents agree on certain principles of social justice, such as the importance of obtaining and securing rights, income equality, women’s rights, minority rights, and freedom of expression (Abubakar & Bamualim, 2006). Almost all Muslim respondents agree on the need to support equality and to have freedom of expression. It is clear that Muslims are quite rational in responding to values of income justice, such as the agreement that income should be based on skill and talent, and that income equality may reduce or prevent social conflicts. The concern of Muslims in this survey over women’s rights and the rights of minority groups are also moderately high, with over 70% expressing such concerns. However, these concerns and levels of support do not necessarily achieve congruence with the target

of giving. As mentioned in the previous section, a strong religious motivation and a traditional pattern and practice of giving have not brought the generosity of Muslims to match the purposes of long-term social justice.

Second, the tendency toward social justice can also be seen from the motives for giving. A total of 11% of respondents stated that they give for 1) discharging 'the rights of the poor', 2) reducing poverty, and 3) helping the government to increase community wellbeing. These motives show evidence of concerns over other people's rights and welfare, which is itself an indicator of the potential of social justice philanthropy.

Third, the target of giving to social justice purposes is low, even marginal. Muslims give their *sedekah* directly to recipient organizations, ranging from schools to Islamic associations and organizations working on human rights. However, while 94% of Muslims donate to religious organizations, only 3% of them donate to human rights organizations, 11% donate to women's organizations, and 11% to environmental organizations. Giving to organizations is determined by religious affiliation and neighborhood attachments. This shows the domination of a traditional pattern of giving. What is clear is that issues related to the empowerment of human rights, or to women and labor rights, do not attract much attention from Muslim donors. Advocacy activities are somehow too abstract, so they are not popular targets of giving among Muslim donors. In the same way, giving for 'long-term purposes', which has the character of social justice philanthropy, is also not popular. Indeed, persuading and fundraising for social justice projects is a challenging task.

The crucial question – fourth – is whether religion becomes a constraint for the development of social justice philanthropy. The 2003 survey shows that religion is an important cause for giving, and that Muslims who donate to religious causes also tend to donate to social causes.

Analyzing the pattern of donors for neighborhood associations, I find that two thirds of the Muslims surveyed donate to both religious and secular causes, whilst only about one third donate solely to religious organizations (Fauzia, 2010b, p. 61).

This finding shows a similar picture to that in the US, where religious people are most likely to give, and that the person gives not only for religious causes but also to secular causes (Wuthnow & Hodkinson, 1990). In the Indonesian context, data is similar to that of Mujani's (2004) thesis, which finds that Muslims who participate in religious activities will also participate in secular and community activities. This implies that Muslims also donate to non-*zakat* and humanitarian organizations (such as discussed in the previous section) as well as to secular NGOs. For example, in the aftermath of the tsunami in Aceh, the SCTV (TV News) Foundation attracted a huge amount of donations for the victims of the tsunami (Kehati, 2005).

As one important element of social justice is the principle of non-discrimination, a further question is whether Muslims agree with the notion of giving to others without considering their religion. Survey results show that 77% of the respondents find no problem with this (Fauzia, 2010b, p. 61).

However, when the survey asked a more detailed question related to the possibility of *zakat* money being given to non-Muslims, half of the Muslim respondents (51%) voiced their objections, while 45% of the respondents agreed that money could be given to non-Muslims, and 4% did not answer. Six percent of the respondents stated that they had already given *zakat* to non-Muslims (Abubakar & Bamualim,

2006, p. 186). A possible hindrance to non-discriminative giving is related to interpretations of *zakat* (almsgiving), which is generally regarded as being given strictly to Muslim beneficiaries, following conservative practices – although contextual and progressive interpretation, such as that by An-Naim & Halim (2006), has permitted *zakat* to be used for anyone who is in need. There are also many other forms of charitable donations that are not subject to such strict and detailed regulations such as *sedekah*. The 2003 survey data confirm that non-*zakat* organizations have greater potential for social justice philanthropy. This hindrance caused by interpretation does not diminish or detract from the humanitarian values of Muslim donors. The survey found that 73% of Muslim respondents shared a concern to improve their attitude toward minority groups. When they were asked the challenging question on their agreement as to whether or not to give to causes outside the traditional mainstream, their answers remained positive. 38% of Muslim respondents wanted to give to non-Muslims, 83% wanted to give to refugees, 56% agreed on the need to save sexual workers who were forced to work by giving them support, and 37% were even willing to give to victims of HIV/AIDS (Abubakar & Bamualim, 2006, p. 186). The willingness to give to and work on HIV-related projects was not typically supported, however, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah had proved it was possible. Both organizations collaborated with the Global Fund to fight HIV, TB, and Malaria (Rae, 2017), and this example, together with the survey findings and case studies discussed, build a picture of the potential for social justice philanthropy, especially in larger organizations. Many organizations remain very strict or too careful in their interpretation and tend to follow the mainstream understanding, but a number of organizations have stepped up their work for the social justice practices of philanthropy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While a majority of Indonesian Muslims preserve a traditional way of giving, the innovation and reform pioneered by modern Islamic philanthropy organizations contribute to the transformation of the sector. Recent developments in the practice of Islamic philanthropy discussed in this article have shown encouraging features from both recent case studies and the 2003 survey data. The contribution of modernization to legal reform, management, and to the program innovation of philanthropy organizations has increased the possibility of philanthropy for development and social justice, but remains very premature. Islamization encourages the practice of Islamic philanthropy, but it also impedes it due to the dominance of strict, traditional interpretations of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and to the politicization of Islam.

The trend toward modernization has not necessarily led to thoughts that are inclusive. Both modernization and Islamization bring a notion of social justice philanthropy. Progressive thoughts may arise from any religious tradition and a social justice perspective does not necessarily imbed itself in either modernization or Islamization, but in the progressive thoughts inherent within the religion. This is similar to the argument that modern philanthropy is not necessarily socially just. Even though modern philanthropy has potential in the addressing of social justice, in reality some of these thoughts are only modern in terms of aspects of their outlook; their concern is far from addressing injustices.

In Indonesia, traditional – and strict – religious behaviors have complicated modern program management, and have hindered long-term structural programs as organizations face difficulties in adapting *fiqh* regulations established in the eighth and ninth century cultures of the Middle East to the modern situation of Indonesia. However, efforts toward reinterpretation have been on the way, not only in Indonesia (Abidin, 2004), but also in international Islamic agencies (Shirazi, 2014). Practices of Islamic philanthropy with an inclusive approach, non-discrimination, and long-term structural programs have been seen here and there, including in the establishment and support given to non-*zakat* philanthropic organizations and forums/associations.

The transformation toward social justice philanthropy has benefited from dialogues and exchanges between Islamic philanthropy organizations and secular ones, as well as with other faith-based organizations that are concerned with the agenda of social justice. Indeed, there are many charitable foundations, such as media-based, CSR, and family foundations that come from different spheres than *zakat* organizations but whose work is similar or complementary in intention and character. From the exchange initiated between 2002 and 2004, Islamic philanthropy organizations learned from the development of the philanthropy sector in Indonesia, Asia, and the US, and about various issues such as environment and advocacy. It is likely that this dialog contributed to the discreet acceptance of the term ‘philanthropy’. *Zakat* organizations continue to engage with secular NGOs and work on public policies, on anti-corruption, on consumer affairs, on the empowerment of women, and on issues of social justice.

Overall, while not rapid, the continuance of the development toward social justice philanthropy has been clear. The account that asserts that religious charities have more interest in promoting their own confessions (Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan, 2014) may continue to be challenged step by step by a more vibrant, inclusive philanthropy. The future of social justice philanthropy remains possible but will depend on a stable political and economic situation, support from the state, and the existence of a strong civil society.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article benefits from data from my current research on Islam, NGOs, & humanitarianism at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (funded by the Asia Research Institute), and data from previous research on Philanthropy for Social Justice in Muslim Societies (funded by the Ford Foundation, 2002-2004).

Addressing Unfortunate Wayfarer: Islamic Philanthropy and Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong

Hilman Latief

► Latief, H. (2017). Addressing unfortunate wayfarer: Islamic philanthropy and Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10 (2), 237-255.

This article analyses how Islamic philanthropy is translated and reiterated in contemporary Indonesia and contextualized in the international arena. It examines the experience of an Islamic philanthropic organization, *Dompét Dhuafa* (DD), in defining and addressing types of *zakat* beneficiaries by, among other things, addressing unfortunate Indonesian migrant workers residing in Hong Kong. The effort of DD to expand the types of *zakat* recipients reflects a new development of Islamic philanthropy activism in Indonesia. There is a substantial change in how *zakat* is formulated and practiced among Indonesian Muslims in general, and in particular Indonesian migrant workers overseas. Islamic philanthropic organizations, such as DD, have functioned not only as intermediaries between benefactors in Indonesia and Indonesian migrant workers overseas but also as energizers to encourage the *zakat* practice among fortunate migrant workers to help their unfortunate fellows overseas.

Keywords: Dompét Dhuafa; Indonesia; Islamic Philanthropy; Migrant Workers; Relief



INTRODUCTION

Over decades, Indonesian Muslims have practiced *zakat* (almsgiving or mandatory giving). This involves paying 2.5% to 10% of their income, and channeling their *sedekah* or *sadaqah* (voluntary giving) to semi-permanent or ad hoc *zakat* collectors established in the communities, who are referred to as '*amil* (from Arabic: the alms collector). The collected funds are mainly disbursed among deserving beneficiaries in the neighborhood, such as the poor and the needy. Therefore, *zakat* and charity practices in Indonesia and many other countries are very local in character, taking place as a sort of community-based self-help or communal support (Ali & Hatta, 2014; Weiss, 2002). However, there has been a substantial change in *zakat* practice where a new form of Islamic philanthropic organizations arose in urban areas, emerging as well-organized organizations with regard to management, competencies, and institutional capacity (Alawiyah, 2010; Latief, 2010; Lessy, 2013) that can formulate and adopt new and 'modern' concepts of 'development' by engaging not only a 'service approach' but also an entrepreneurial approach as well as innovation in finding solutions and measuring impact (Anheir & Leat, 2006, p. 90; Payton & Moody, 2008). Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia have also formulated ideas and activities that align with the framework of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Noor & Pickup, 2017).

Hence, Muslim understanding of philanthropy in Indonesia has also changed over time as Islamic philanthropic organizations seek a new interpretation of who *zakat* beneficiaries are and why they deserve assistance from philanthropic organizations. It is unsurprising that Muslim philanthropic organizations in Indonesia have played pivotal roles not only in relieving the poor in neighborhoods, but also in operating humanitarian missions and relief projects in disaster-affected spots in Indonesia and overseas, notably where Muslims and Muslim countries are affected (Bush, 2015; Latief, 2013, 2016). Some Islamic philanthropic organizations also focus on community-based economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, income-generating activities, and other types of development-oriented projects. This means that some portions of *zakat* and *sadaqah* funds collected by Islamic philanthropic organizations have been used to address not only the symptoms but also the roots of the problems, thus providing a long-term impact.

The expansion of the scope of philanthropic practices in Indonesia indicate that there has been a process of professionalization and the increase of the organizational capacity of Islamic philanthropic organizations as a response to the government regulation as well as a fulfillment of people's demand for accountability. This suggests that Muslim philanthropic organizations have been underpinned and equipped with specialized human resources, state regulation, and various methods of financial resource mobilization. Beyond that, there has been an effort to reinterpret some Quranic concepts about the eight types of *zakat* beneficiaries, partly because challenges faced in recent times are more complicated than those in the past. The categories of those in need in today's world have changed in line with the complexity of the root of poverty. According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), the nature of poverty is multidimensional. It does not only relate to the fulfillment of basic needs such as food and housing, but also other needs such as sanitation, clean water, education, healthcare, and the opportunity to obtain proper jobs (OPHI, 2017).

According to the Qur'an (At-Taubah: 60), *zakat* fund should and can be disbursed to particular types of beneficiaries: the needy (*fakir*), the poor (*miskin*), the alms collector (*amil*), in the path of God (*fi sabilillah*), people burdened with debt (*gharimum*), wayfarer or traveler (*ibn sabil*), people in bondage or slavery (*riqab*), and those who have inclined toward Islam (*muallaf*). Muslim scholars hold different views as to whether *zakat* funds should be equally distributed to the eight types of beneficiaries or whether they should only be dispensed to certain categories found in the neighborhood, notably the poor and the needy. In practice, two types of *zakat* beneficiaries which are rarely included in Islamic philanthropic organizations are 'the travelers' and 'people in bondage'. This is because there is lack of new interpretation among Muslim scholars (*ulama*) about the travelers and people in bondage in modern times, and, thus, *zakat* fund, for the most part, only addresses poverty problems in the communities. *Ulama* and *zakat* collectors have mainly paid attention to the poor and the needy visible in the neighborhood while the travelers and people in bondage are hardly found in daily life.¹

1 Some Muslim scholars have attempted to translate and interpret the meaning of *ibn sabil* and *riqab* in modern context. Literally, *ibn sabil* means the traveler or those who face shortage during their travel, and therefore deserve aid from *zakat* fund. Masdar Farid Mas'udi is one of the leading Muslim scholars in Indonesia and active in the Nahdlatul Ulama who have attempted to provide new insight into the definition of these two types of *zakat* recipients.

In Muslim literature, *riqab* is often associated with the slaves in early Islamic history, and now most of Muslim countries do not recognize the concept of slavery.

This article addresses the role of *Dompot Dhuafa* in linking Indonesian benefactors and *zakat* recipients with migrant workers, as well in organizing and stimulating philanthropy among migrant workers. This article is based on my broader research on Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia and particularly on my field research in Indonesia and Hong Kong in 2008 and 2010 where *Dompot Dhuafa* set up branch offices. In Hong Kong, I visited some shelters in Kowloon and Causeway Bay as well as met and interviewed people with different backgrounds, such as migrant workers, NGO activists, clerics, and staff of Islamic philanthropic organizations. This article argues that there has been a new interpretation of *zakat* categories introduced by philanthropic organizations.

INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

For many years, Indonesia has been renowned for its supply of migrant workers overseas, notably to Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Emirates) as well as to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia. Indonesia is one of the largest suppliers of women migrant workers to Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong (Ananta, Kartowibowo, Wiyono, & Chotib, 1998; Constable, 2007; Hugo, 2002; Silvey, 2004). The migration of Indonesian domestic workers to Hong Kong began in the early 1990s (Rahman & Fee, 2009). Changing demographics, the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, and the political-economic context prompted the Indonesian government to promote the export of female labor to Hong Kong and other economies in Asia and the Middle East (Constable, 2009). The *Indonesian Statistic Bureau* (BPS) and *National Agency for the Protection and Placement of International Migrant Workers* (BNP2TKI) have reported that the number of migrant workers from Indonesia from 1996 until 2014, both male and female, fluctuated but the number and population of Indonesian migrant in Hong Kong remain high (see Table 1). In 2001 and 2003, the Indonesian government strengthened the policy and implemented stricter requirement for

Table 1. Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong 1996–2014

Year	Number of Migrant Workers	Female (%)	Male (%)
1996	517,169	288,832 (66%)	228,337 (44%)
2000	435,222	297,273 (68%)	137,949 (32%)
2004	380,690	296,615 (78%)	84,075 (22%)
2007	696,746	543,859 (78%)	152,887 (22%)
2010	575,804	451,120 (78%)	124,684 (22%)
2011	586,802	376,686 (64%)	210,116 (36%)
2012	494,609	279,784 (57%)	214,825 (43%)
2013	586,802	276,998 (54%)	235,170 (46%)
2014	429,872	243,629 (57%)	186,243 (43%)

(Sources: BNP2TKI & BPS, ILO; own compilation)

migrant worker agencies, the number of migrant workers sent in 2004 decreased to compare with those who were sent from 2007 until 2014.

Indonesian female migrant workers have surpassed the number of men since the mid-1980s (Hugo, 2002). Economic instability and limited access to jobs caused unemployed women in some regions of Indonesia in West Java, East Java, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Nusa Tenggara Timur, and others to seek jobs overseas. For particular groups of people with limited skills and low levels of education, working as maids or domestic helpers in foreign countries seems the ‘best’ and most ‘promising’ – but at the same time – uncertain option, which may risk their lives. As the acute poverty-related problems cannot always be effectively resolved, either by the government or civil society organizations, women in rural areas are still interested in working abroad to secure a better life.

There are three categories of migrant workers who have left Indonesia to seek employment abroad (Constable, 2007; Rahman & Fee, 2009). The first are highly-skilled workers whose considerable expertise is very rare and needed by large companies in developed countries. The second are semi-skilled workers whose practical skills are rather common, and yet needed in both developed and developing countries, and who just require short-term training. The last are low-skilled workers who are mostly assigned to the informal or domestic sector (Constable, 2007; Jones, 2000; Loveband, 2007). Women migrant workers (*Tenaga Kerja Wanita*, or TKW) from Indonesia, who are also termed ‘domestic workers’ or ‘domestic helpers’, are predominately lower-skilled and lower-educated compared with those from other Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Thailand, because most Indonesian workers, based on a research survey conducted by IOM (2010, p. 75), have merely primary education (elementary schools and junior high schools) and only a few have college diplomas. Indonesian migrant workers who are mainly working as housemaids are paid less (Rahman, 2005, p. 90). Men who are willing to work abroad are mainly appointed as laborers in various kinds of ‘dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs’ (3-D Jobs) in the industrial and construction sector, while women are mainly employed in the informal sector. Women migrant workers’ vulnerability lies mainly in the uncertainty of gaining adequate protection from the state, not only during recruitment by private agencies in Indonesia but also during their work overseas (ILO, 2015). It has often been reported in the mass media and in reports that some domestic workers from Indonesia working in such countries as Malaysia, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia have had horrifying experiences, often suffering sexual and physical abuse, and at the same time receiving no adequate protection from the Indonesian authorities (Rudnyckj, 2004; Setyawati, 2013).

In Hong Kong, domestic workers have a minimum wage stipulated in their contracts (Constable, 2009). However, Rahman and Fee (2009) found that the mean earning of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong was HKD 3,333.82 per month suggesting the presence of illegal wage underpayment. It can be summarized that Indonesian migrant domestic workers form “a marginalised group along the intersecting categories of gender, economic class and migrant status/citizenship” (Rother, 2017, p. 964).

The plight of domestic workers working as housemaids overseas continues (BNP2TKI, 2017). At the same time, human trafficking and the dispatch of women migrant labor to work as housemaids overseas have increasingly become the concerns of NGOs (Marcoes, 2002; Silvey, 2004). Muslim philanthropic organizations

started formulating strategies on how to cope with problems faced by migrant workers, among other strategies by expanding the scope of types of *zakat* beneficiaries (Latief, 2017). In recent times, the enrichment of Muslim discourse and praxis on Islamic philanthropy in general, and in particular categories of *zakat* beneficiaries, signifies vibrant engagement of Muslim philanthropic organizations in response to the hardship in the communities. More specifically, the poor prospects faced by Indonesian women migrant workers have stimulated Islamic associations to speak up for them and show their dissatisfaction towards insufficient government policies. For example, in 2000, the Indonesian *Ulama Council* (MUI) enacted Islamic legal opinions (*fatwas*), according to which the plight of Indonesian women workers overseas was considered 'illicit' (*haram*) and as something to be avoided by any individual or institution. This *fatwa* also insisted that the Ministry of Manpower should stop sending Indonesian women to work overseas, unless the government can ensure the safety of female migrants and protect their honor and dignity (see MUI's Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VI/MUI/2000). Similar calls were made by some Islamic associations that urged the government to issue a regulation that could prevent female migrant workers leaving, notably to Saudi Arabia.²

CONTEXTUALIZING MUSLIM PHILANTHROPY IN INDONESIA

I started conducting research on Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia more than ten years ago. I found that there were some Islamic organizations that specifically worked on poverty relief by providing direct aid, basic health care, scholarship, and income-generating projects for low-income families. These philanthropic organizations attempted to participate in increasing the equality in life of the community by utilizing fund collected from the communities. Unlike *zakat* agencies established in many mosques throughout Indonesia, this new form of Muslim philanthropic organizations is more publicly visible. Muslim philanthropic organizations rent houses or stores in strategic areas where the middle-class families would see their offices and advertisement. Banners to attract Muslim middle-class to channel their *zakat* and *sadaqah* as well as to participate in various types of social entrepreneurship, including financing poverty alleviation projects, could be seen in many places, such as main roads, boulevards, crossroads, shopping malls, airports, and business centers (Meij, 2009). Likewise, advertisements of Islamic philanthropic projects appeared on radio, billboard, television, and newspaper. This suggests that the nature of Islamic philanthropy has transformed from its modest form into a new pattern (Retsikas, 2014).³

2 It should be noted that in 2000, MUI also enacted Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VI/MUI/2000 that puts emphasis on the negative impact faced by female workers when they are sent for work overseas without being accompanied by *muhrum* (somebody/relatives whom a woman is never allowed to marry because of their close blood relationship). The issuance of this *fatwa* was to protect women migrant workers overseas as well as to remind the government to provide best protection system. Some leaders of Women Muslim organizations such as Siti Noorjannah Djohantini of *Aisyiyah*, Titin Suprihatin of *Persatuan Islam Istri* (*Persistri*), Valina Singka Subekti of *Wanita Syarikat* Islam raised similar voices, urging the government to halt the dispatch of women migrant workers overseas (Ruslan, 2010).

3 In the past, *zakat* collectors or philanthropic organizations only operated during the Ramadan month and were run by small and ad hoc committees. Those organizations set up charity programs in the communities by distributing *zakat* and *sadaqa* fund without any vision to create development-oriented projects.

People working in philanthropic organizations, such as DD, *Rumah Zakat* (House of Zakat), and LAZISMU (*Muhammadiyah Zakat Agency*) are not only part-time workers but also fulltime workers. The directors and CEOs of philanthropic organizations wear coats and ties while their staff dress in stylish uniforms to indicate discipline and professionalism.

The educational background of the advocates (directors and managers) of Islamic philanthropic organizations varies. Some graduated from top universities in Indonesia holding a Bachelor or Master's degree in medical sciences, economics, management, social sciences, or religious studies. They can communicate with directors and managers from national and international companies and create strategic development projects proposed to donors from affluent families and upper Muslim middle-class. Therefore, Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia that have emerged over the past 20 years are no longer the small community groups with weak management that they used to be. Instead, they appear in public as professional organizations that uphold principles of professionalism and promote modern corporate culture. The programs provided by Muslim philanthropic organizations are almost similar to those offered by other development and religiously-affiliated NGOs. These phenomena can be seen in urban areas, especially in the major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya.

Dompet Dhuafa (DD) is one of the largest Islamic philanthropic organizations that was established during the 'New Order' era. It was founded in 1993 by some Muslim journalists working in the *Republika Daily News*. DD started changing public perception of the nature of Islamic philanthropy or *zakat* collection in Indonesia. *Zakat* is promoted as a tool to strengthen the communities, alleviate poverty, and increase people's quality of life. With other newly founded *zakat* collectors in the 1990s, DD contextualized the meaning of *zakat* for the communities by operating projects in both urban and rural areas. Improving skills and knowledge of farmers in villages, sailors in coastal areas, and low-income urban families to run a micro business were among the popular projects organized by DD. Likewise, in the aftermath of the disaster in some regions of Indonesia, DD actively engaged by sending volunteers and aid for disaster victims while at the same time attracting donors to channel their money through DD (Alawiyah, 2010). Apart from DD, there were some other organizations with similar visions that also worked with and gained support from the communities, such as *Rumah Zakat* and *Daarut Tauhid* in Bandung, PKPU and LAZISMU in Jakarta, or *Al-Falah Foundation* and *Rumah Yatim* in Surabaya. In short, Muslim philanthropic organizations vibrantly developed in the main cities of Indonesia, especially in Java.

Although similarities can be seen within Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia in running charity programs, there are also particularities and differences in formulating the issues and addressing the problems. Some pay much attention to basic health services, while others are more interested in supporting education for low-income families. Some organizations work specifically on income-generating projects, while others dedicate their aid to *dakwah* activities. As mentioned previously, the uniqueness of DD became evident when it started operating its organization

The *zakat* committees were usually dismissed soon after *Idul Fitri* or the end of Ramadan month.

branches overseas, such as in Japan, Australia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Thus, DD was able to convince supporters in Indonesian communities abroad and started to run development programs in Indonesia and other countries where many Indonesian workers reside.

In 2004 DD established a branch office in Hong Kong, one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in Asia, and home to approximately 150,000 Indonesian migrant workers (Asian Migrant Centre, 2017). The DD branch office has cooperated with some Indonesian migrant associations.⁴ Various reasons, mainly *humanitarian* and *religious* ones, have been given by DD to explain its presence in a city such as Hong Kong. Humanitarian issues relate to the actual conditions and prospects of migrant workers who have been placed in inopportune and weak positions, especially in facing conflicts between themselves and their employers. A variety of problems have marked the lives of many female migrant workers, including sexual abuse and the inappropriate breaking of the terms of the contract by both employers or job providers.⁵ At the same time, the employees, predominantly women, are in a weak position due to their status as migrant workers or ‘foreigners’, regardless of their legal status as residents. The second set of reasons given by DD, pertaining to religion, is also instrumental in shaping the typical social activities carried out by DD in Hong Kong. Unlike Indonesian female migrant workers in Middle Eastern countries, who are close to ‘the cradle of Islam’, the migrant workers’ religious life in Hong Kong, as far as DD officials are concerned, has become the target of Christian missionary activities. This indicates that as an Islamic organization, DD attempted to assist Muslim migrant workers to prevent them from the influence of other religions. It is unsurprising that DD frequently organized Islamic study gathering (*pengajian*) for Muslim migrant workers. Apart from this, some Indonesian female migrant workers fall into the trap of becoming commercial sex workers in Hong Kong.⁶ The third factor is the political openness in Hong Kong, which makes it possible for the NGO sector to develop; unlike in other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, two Muslim countries that are quite resistant to the NGO sector (Ford, 2006; Hugo, 1993). In fact, in these two Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, the situation of Indonesian domestic workers appears to be considerably worse than that in Hong Kong (Ford, 2006). Although migrant workers still experience violent abuse, termination of employment, problems with the employer, unpaid salary, and sexual harassment in Hong Kong, avenues to resolve the problem and regain the migrants’ rights through the courts are relatively open.

There has been a lot of public concern over women’s poverty, trafficking, and the plight of migrant workers. Like other development NGOs, DD has extended its social

4 It is worth emphasizing that the establishment of DD’s branches overseas was also stimulated by the fact that there have been many success stories of Indonesian migrants who can be regarded as prospective benefactors of DD. So far, DD’s overseas branches have been set up in places such as Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Australia, and these countries are quite distinct from one another in terms of culture, politics, and economics.

5 This information is based on my interview and discussion with some women migrant workers and NGO activists in Hong Kong in 2008 and 2010. The *Migrant Care*, an Indonesian NGO working on advocacy for Indonesian migrants overseas, especially in evaluating and fostering government regulation has provided information on how Indonesian women migrants are vulnerable to any abuse and unfair policies (Ignacio & Mejia, 2008).

6 The experience of one ex-migrant worker in Hong Kong has been penned, published, and filmed in Indonesia (Susanti, 2007).

programs to deal with poverty issues in general, and in particular women's empowerment. In fact, DD as a growing Islamic philanthropic organization has so far operated both relief and development-oriented projects in the national and international arenas. For this Islamic charitable association, underprivileged female migrant workers, especially those who are not paid appropriately or who experience abuse, can be regarded as one type of *zakat* beneficiary who needs assistance from Islamic organizations. There are a variety of expressions in Indonesian that can be used to refer to female migrant workers. The most popular of which are *Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* (Indonesian Workers, TKI), *Tenaga Kerja Wanita* (Indonesian Women Workers, TKW), *Buruh Migran Indonesia* (Indonesian Migrant Labors, BMI), or even *Pembantu Rumah Tangga* (domestic servants, PRT). While these terms are perceived in Indonesian society as referring to occupations that are of an 'inferior status', 'less respectable', and are even associated with a 'subordinate' occupation, DD has endeavored to employ the more neutral term *perantau* (migrant).

Efforts to link *ibn sabil* (wayfarer, traveler) and *riqab* to *perantau* or migrant workers by DD are appropriate, and we have not so far seen such an understanding formulated by Muslim scholars at MUI, thus DD's interpretation of *zakat* beneficiaries at that time was sensible and signifying a progressive understanding of *zakat* and its beneficiaries. DD has been able to respond to the current challenges and problems of transnational migration. If we take a closer look at *fatwa* (legal opinions) issued by religious authorities or Islamic organizations, such as MUI, *Muhammadiyah*, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, and *Persatuan Islam* in Indonesia, we may see that, for the most part, *fatwa* issued by those organizations relate to the issues of *zakat* collection, percentage of *zakat*, mechanism of *zakat* distribution, and wealth subjected to *zakat* in modern times. However, discussion and debates over the new meaning of *zakat beneficiaries* are hard to find.

Muhammad Hasby Ash-Shiddieqy, a prominent Muslim scholar, and professor from Syariah Faculty, IAIN (the State Institute of Islamic Studies) Sunan Kalijaga who wrote extensive works on Islamic jurisprudence and history, including *fiqh* of *zakat*, explains that *ibn sabil* can be interpreted in various meanings. *Ibn sabil* can mean "those who are away from their hometown and cannot afford travel expenses and children abandoned by their parents" (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2009, p. 168). Meanwhile, according to Haji Malik Karim Amrullah, the first chairman of MUI, *ibn sabil* can mean "affluent families who are disconnected from their wealth and, thus, cannot afford their life or those who are expelled from a certain Muslim country due to political turmoil and reside in another Muslim country" (Amrullah, 2015, p. 138; author's translation). Amrullah's view shares a similarity with Masdar F. Masudi's (2005) understanding which mentions that *ibn sabil* in modern times can be associated with homelessness, street children, and refugees.

Unlike Islamic scholars mentioned above, DD's activists link the concept *ibn sabil* to the concept of *perantau*. The term *perantau* in the Indonesian context is a term mainly used by people from West Sumatra who migrated to other parts of Indonesia to run businesses, notably restaurants, and to build their careers. Despite its 'neutral' connotations, which avoids disgracing women migrant domestic workers, the term *perantau* in Islamic literature can also be translated into, and associated with, one of the *zakat* beneficiaries called *ibn sabil* (wayfarer, traveler). The concept of *perantau*, in

this respect, can mean those who are struggling to make a living overseas. It is also worth bearing in mind that, in practice, *ibn sabil* is an entity that is rarely included as a *zakat* beneficiary. The existence of the concept of *ibn sabil* and *riqab* are even commonly put aside in the whole discussion of *du'afa* or *mustad'afun* (those who are oppressed).⁷ Arifin Purwakananta, the program director of DD, for example, suggests that DD aims to act as a 'small general consulate' of Indonesia, an association that may support migrants by giving them both, social and legal assistance. He considers the disadvantaged migrants as representing *mustad'afin* (oppressed entities) that need not only short-term service, but more particularly, long-term political and legal aid (Arifin Purwakananta, 25 January 2009).

DOMPET DHUFAFA AND 'UNFORTUNATE' MIGRANT WORKERS

DD has created a variety of activities relevant to the migrants' needs, ranging from providing shelters for homeless migrants who have been driven from their dwellings to facilitating the establishment of migrant associations and supporting their activities. To facilitate the establishment of shelters (to rent an apartment for unfortunate migrants) and support four existing shelters used by Indonesian migrant communities, DD receives funds from donors in Indonesia and Hong Kong. Migrant women, especially, are in need of support and assistance, not only from the government, who may provide a legal umbrella for the protection of migrants, but also from other parties like NGOs, who may offer practical and psychological assistance. For example, there are some 'shelters' for Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong and Macao that have been managed by various Indonesian associations. 'Shelter' in this respect means an apartment rented out by NGOs or associations to temporarily accommodate migrant workers who are facing difficulties, such as losing their jobs, something that automatically causes them to become 'homeless' during their stay in Hong Kong. Religious institutions, notably Muslim and Christian ones (i.e., *Christian Action*), are among the most active agencies assisting female migrant workers in Hong Kong. Some shelters, therefore, have been sponsored by Christian congregations, others by Islamic associations (Pdt. Johan Kusmanto, 8 June 2010).

Migrants in Hong Kong who cannot find a new job within three weeks after being fired by their employers have to return to their home countries. It is in this critical period that they usually stay in a shelter while contacting different agencies to seek a new job. The shelter located in Kowloon, co-supported by the *Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrant Workers Organizations* (KOTKIHO) and DD, for example, accommodates about 20 domestic workers from Indonesia, whose ages range from 20 to 30 years, with various problems, mainly contract termination by the employers. This shelter is, of course, far from sufficient to accommodate all these unfortunate domestic workers. It is run by a lady who has been living in Hong Kong for more than 30

7 The experience of *zakat* agencies suggests that there are a lot of people who label themselves as travelers and who, having run out of supplies or money, seek assistance from agency offices. They usually ask for a certain amount of cash. Despite the willingness of *zakat* agencies that support these travelers, a tighter procedure has been applied by *zakat* agencies, as there have been many instances of 'fake travelers' abusing the trust of *zakat* agencies. So far, *zakat* agencies have made partnerships with transportation agencies, notably bus companies, and thus only provide a small amount of cash for travelers seeking funds.

years. She came to Hong Kong as a domestic worker, and while there she became active in NGOs, such as KOTKIHO and the *Coalition for Migrants' Rights* (CMR). She has often acted as a 'spokesperson' in court, for the police, or even in public when Indonesian migrant workers have problems. Most of the workers staying in this shelter were looking for new jobs, while others were waiting for the result of court processes.

Another shelter is located in the Causeway Bay area. This shelter also functions as an office of DD, sponsoring various philanthropic and development-oriented activities for domestic workers. There were three DD staff working in this shelter, and during the weekends, 20-30 women migrant volunteers helped DD to introduce *zakat* to migrants and distribute funds to those in need through some kinds of skill-development program and providing assistance in Hong Kong. Often, some domestic workers visit this shelter, either to meet their friends or to become DD volunteers. In the month of Ramadan, shelters established or supported by DD and other Muslim associations become more active as religious gatherings are intensified during this period. On certain occasions, migrants, sponsored by *zakat* agencies like DD, even invite famous preachers from Indonesia, from whom Indonesian migrants may learn new insights on current issues involving Islam in Indonesia.⁸

DD in Hong Kong has several objectives. First of all, it attempts to help solving the problems faced by migrant workers. Although DD has targeted migrant women as their charitable beneficiaries, there is no active discourse on issues such as gender equality and feminism within DD. Instead, DD mainly focuses on protecting and empowering women migrants who work as housemaids. Abdul Ghofur (5 June 2010), head of DD's branch in Hong Kong explains:

For the time being, we are dealing with the symptom or fateful result of the problem of poverty in our country (Indonesia). But in our recent programs we have started to address the 'cause' and the 'symptom'; our mission is to create the agents of social change [among female migrant workers or female ex-migrant workers] when they come back to their hometown.⁹

Secondly, DD acts as an Islamic philanthropic institution that collects and distributes *zakat* and charity from and for migrant workers; and thirdly, it plays a role as a solidarity-creating and *da'wah* (mission) association that assists Muslim migrants who seek Islamic knowledge. As briefly discussed earlier, strengthening religious identity among female migrants is one of the main issues addressed by *zakat* agencies and Muslim community associations. Moreover, religious study groups have functioned not only as a way in which *zakat* agencies and Muslim community associations can

8 It is very common for Indonesian communities abroad to invite preachers (*ustadz*) or Islamic scholars (*ulama*) during Ramadan month, either sponsored by an embassy of the Republic of Indonesia or Indonesian community associations, to assist and give sermons for the whole month in mosques, dwellings belonging to Indonesians, and the office of the Indonesian embassy.

9 At the time I interviewed the director of DD in Hong Kong, there was a knock on the door. A young lady came to this office, crying while carrying a big piece of luggage containing her clothes and other kind of belongings. DD's director approached her and asked about what was going on. She replied: "I've just been fired and my employer did not tell me why". She then dropped her belongings in DD's shelter and after taking a rest for a while, she went out to see an employment agency office in another region of Hong Kong that might find her a new family that might need her skills as a housekeeper.

NO	PROGRAM	KETERANGAN	WAKTU/KET
1	Program Pra Ramadhan " Konser Amal Sulis " Untuk Dhuafa Cerdas & Beasiswa AnakPekerja Migrant"	Program Kampanye Ramadhan, dalam rangka mempersiapkan diri memasuki Ramadhan dan juga untuk menggalang kepedulian PMI (Pekerja Migrant Indonesia untuk Dhuafa Cerdas & Anak Pekerja Migrant)	2 Agustus 2009 (Southron Stadium Wanchai)
2	Ceria Bersama Sahabat Shelter	Program Wisata Rohani untuk para PMI yang sedang bermasalah dan berada di shelter (Tour masjid to masjid, Silaturahmi ke Imam Besar masjid dan Outbound/ games bersama menghadapi masalah)	15 Agustus 2009 (Masjid Central, Masjid Chaiwan, Masjid Happy Valley, Pantai Happy Valley)
3	Tebar berkah 1000 Tajil (Kurmaku untukmu)	Program pemberian Tajil (kurma) kepada para PMI yang sedang berpuasa	6 & 13 September 2009 (Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories, Macao)

Figure 1. A leaflet created by Dompot Dhuafa to mobilise *zakat* funds from, and to organize social and religious activities among Muslim migrant workers in Hong Kong (source: author's collection).

set up religious patronage for migrants but also as a way in which migrant women can overcome their financial and social problems during their time working in Hong Kong. These study groups also aim to strengthen female migrants' objective to work in Hong Kong, which is primarily to earn money to support left-behind families in Indonesia. Religious knowledge, therefore, becomes guidance for those workers to stick to authorized occupations and to avoid illicit and 'dishonest' jobs and to prepare for their futures after coming back to their hometowns in Indonesia.

Therefore, it can be suggested that as part of *da'wah*, the intention of DD's branch in Hong Kong is also to strengthen Muslim workers' religious commitment to Islam. As minority people who live far from their hometowns, social cohesion and solidarity among migrant workers is relatively strong. Migrant workers try to forge solid relationships, as they want to share similar – both sweet and bitter – experiences. Hence, the establishment of Indonesian migrant associations inevitably takes place in many countries; Hong Kong is not an exception. In Hong Kong, there are many other Indonesian associations with various religious, social, and cultural backgrounds and they have made partnerships with DD branch office in organizing various activities such as public discussion, lectures, entrepreneurship training, seminars, workshop, etc. DD has functioned as both a *zakat* collector and provider. As a *zakat* collector, DD has organized giving practice among Indonesian migrants, whose donations are used for wide-ranging projects. Within one year, DD could collect approximately

HKD 150,000 to HKD 200,000 (USD 26,000) in donations from migrant workers themselves. DD branch office in Hong Kong has received subsidy from DD Office in Jakarta for its operational cost and program in Hong Kong.¹⁰

In the event of a crisis such as a natural disaster back home, Indonesian migrants overseas in Hong Kong, as in many other countries, usually assist by sending money through humanitarian NGOs. In that situation, DD could function an intermediary between migrants in Hong Kong and disaster victims in Indonesia. However, in a normal situation, the main objective of DD in Hong Kong is to collect funds from 'fortunate' migrant workers, or what can be referred to as 'migrant philanthropy' to support unfortunate fellow migrants in Hong Kong. This objective is different from the establishment of DD's branch offices in Australia and Japan, for example, which, in fact, is intended specifically to organize 'diaspora philanthropy' (Anand, 2004; Brinkerhoff, 2013) to support social projects in Indonesia. This is because Indonesian workers in developed countries such as Australia can usually expect better social, economic and legal conditions and they can contribute to resolve problems faced by Indonesians back home (Arifin Purwakananta, 25 February 2009).

DD STRATEGIES: MUTUAL HELP, SOLIDARITY, AND RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS

Like other Islamic philanthropic associations in Indonesia, religious study groups seem to have become one appealing way to disseminate Islamic messages on the necessity of building solidarity and social cohesion among migrants, and in turn, these messages are gradually translated into more concrete actions. To run its branch office in Hong Kong, DD has appointed staff knowledgeable about Islam and acquainted with development-oriented projects. The staff recruited were trained on how to raise funds as well as how to create development and training projects for migrants. Building solidarity among migrants has become the priority of the DD program, under which social and moral awareness among migrants are a necessity for helping each other evolve. Of course, DD is not the only Islamic association in Hong Kong. There are some long-established migrant associations whose concerns deal primarily with the welfare of Indonesian migrants. Therefore, the way in which DD engages in the public sphere of Indonesian communities' workers in Hong Kong has been expressed through building partnerships with other Indonesian workers' associations. This is partly because Indonesian migrants reside in various areas of Hong Kong, including other cities, such as Macao, and partly because other associations are already more familiar with the work and typical problems faced by migrant workers.

Like other *zakat* agencies that keep a low profile and refrain from political criticism, DD portrays itself as a religiously-motivated philanthropic association. To be able to engage in social and economic enterprises, DD has set up three main

10 I have not found a comprehensive financial report from DD in Hong Kong. But according to DDs June 2014 report, the DD office in Hong Kong spends HKD 37, 800 (USD 4,800) for office operational cost per month while receiving a subsidy of HKD 27, 500 (USD 3,522) from Jakarta. For the whole expenses (office and program) in May and June 2014, DD received HKD 118,859.30 (USD 15,224) and spent HKD 184,728.88 (USD 23,661). It should be noted that in the first years of its operation, almost 100 percent of the money came from DD office in Jakarta, and then starting from 2006, DD operation in Hong Kong could be mainly financed locally and just received small portion of subsidies from Jakarta.



Figure 2. Migrant workers raise their voices and aspirations in a demonstration held in Hong Kong. (source: author's collection)

programs in Hong Kong that relate mainly to life-skills training and development. The first program is 'Self-Reliance for Migrants' (*Migran Usaha Mandiri*), under which DD attempts to cultivate and fortify the entrepreneurship mentality of migrants who may return to their hometowns and start new lives as entrepreneurs. The second is the 'Migrant Institute' that offers English and Mandarin courses, computer training, as well as sewing and cooking education. The third program is 'Blessed House' (*Rumah Berkah*), in which migrants may practice their knowledge and skills in cooking, sewing, and managing businesses. The migrants usually come to DD's offices and shelters to participate in DD's activities or attend a religious study group during a weekend or holiday, which is also known as a 'Migrant Day' (*Hari Perantau*).

To translate and implement DD's vision of social entrepreneurship, DD and a long-established migrant association called *Perantau Indonesia* (PERI) have embarked on a joint venture by setting up an Indonesian restaurant that also functions as a 'social-entrepreneur laboratory'. This restaurant mainly targets the Hong Kong middle class and Indonesians. The aim of this project, besides promoting innovation in doing business and fulfilling the need of Indonesian migrants for *halal* foods, is to teach migrants how to run a business in an 'Islamic way', and more importantly to facilitate successful and economically established Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong who can express their 'social piety' by supporting and becoming involved in social entrepreneurship for empowering Indonesian women migrants who work as housemaids. Thus, it is worth bearing in mind that DD as a *zakat* agency has endeavored to bridge the gap, at least socially, between Indonesian migrants who have successfully run a good business in Hong Kong, and those women migrants who are in temporary work as housemaids in Hong Kong. No less important is the fact that connecting charitable works with entrepreneurship, as carried out by DD and Indonesian migrant associations, in part, represents their efforts to translate

the notion of social enterprise into innovative action for social and economic development. DD seems to realize that women migrants are temporary workers who, within a few years, in accordance with their contracts, will return to Indonesia. As the migrants will then start new lives, DD prefers giving the migrants assistance in preparing to face new environments and by providing them with various kinds of life-skills training. Some migrants who returned to Indonesia and in turn joined the DD project called *Institut Kemandirian* (Self-Governing Institute), a program that offers skill training, have been able to run a small business (Rustanti & Zuhri, 2016). Indeed, while this project is worthwhile, this does not mean that the project is sustained and can reach the expected goals. Moreover, there are a wide-range of small or micro businesses run by ex-migrant workers in Indonesia, such as car rentals, travel agencies, a sewing factory, restaurants, local food production, etc.

MAKING PARTNERSHIPS WITH SOCIAL MOVEMENT NGOS

In the case of Hong Kong, Indonesian housemaids can raise their voices and protest against exploitation and mistreatment by employers, exploitative agencies, and weak Indonesian government policies, by setting up a migrant association (Blackburn, 2004, p. 191; Indarti, 2007). One of the Indonesian NGOs in Hong Kong that has come to the fore and plays a pivotal role in creating solidarity is the *Indonesian Migrant Workers Union* (IMWU), an advocacy NGO organized directly by Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. Having cooperated with other national and international NGOs based in Hong Kong whose overarching concern relates to migrant workers and women's empowerment, IMWU seems to have a different approach to overcoming migrant problems compared with Islamic philanthropic associations as for instance DD. This can be seen in the way in which the IMWU addresses the issues, makes its voice heard, and expresses its social and political concerns (Constable, 2009). To the IMWU, Indonesian workers abroad face many problems in the workplace due to many reasons. The main cause relates to the government's inability to provide an adequate welfare system in the home country, stimulating disadvantaged groups in society to survive by working abroad. Their conditions have deteriorated with the weakness of regulation in Indonesia, enabling unprofessional and irresponsible agencies to act illegally, and in turn, have caused female migrant workers overseas to suffer. In many cases, the activists of the IMWU also believe that the Indonesian government, including its representation abroad (the Indonesian Embassy), seems reluctant to intervene on behalf of female Indonesian migrant workers when there are problems.

All volunteers who work for IMWU do so part-time and are migrant activists. They can work for IMWU during weekends only, either on Saturdays or Sundays.¹¹ Despite gaining support from others, this NGO empowers itself by revitalizing contributions from members. Every month, workers or helpers voluntarily contribute a certain amount of money to the organization. A pamphlet installed in front of the door of the IMWU Office to remind IMWU members, mentions: "A true workers' union is a

11 In Hong Kong, according to local regulations, domestic workers or helpers should have one day off per week, either Saturday or Sunday. It is very common for helpers from Indonesia to have gatherings in Victoria Park. Thousands of helpers come to the Victoria Park to find funds, to meet friends, to take English courses and computer training, and to attend religious gatherings.



Figure 3. IMWU slogans promoting female migrants' rights. (source: author's collection)

union funded by its members" (*Serikat buruh sejati ialah serikat yang dibiayai oleh anggotanya sendiri*). Some other pamphlets and badges used by IMWU volunteers voiced their concerns in ways that are redolent of labor movement slogans around the world: "Reject outsourcing" and "Give us holidays and rest days". In short, the IMWU, which was established in 1998, is actively part of the global labor and transnational women's solidarity movement, whose concerns include the minimum wage, exploitation, labor rights, and the protection of female migrant workers from abuse (Sweider, 2006, p. 126).

The IMWU often engages with other labor unions such as KOTKIHO, the *Asian Domestic Workers Union* (ADWU), the *Filipino Migrant Workers Union* (FMWU) coalition, and OXFAM, enabling the IMWU to enrich its insight and reinforce its views on resolving migrant workers' problems. In building awareness among migrants to organize demonstrations, the IMWU has also engaged other Hong Kong-based advocacy NGOs and pro-democracy movement to echo their aspirations, addressed either to the labor department in Hong Kong, to the public and employers, or even to the Indonesian Embassy as a representative of the government of Indonesia. Active participation in the IMWU conference on labor affairs organized by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in various countries indicates the commitment of Indonesian migrant workers to fostering migrant workers' rights. Although philanthropic organizations such as DD and other 'movement NGOs' such as IMWU have different concerns and types of activities, they can work together to sponsor migrant activities. DD can work with NGOs, such as IMWU as they share a similar concern about the protection of migrant workers. For example, DD together with other NGOs in Hong Kong assisted female migrant workers whose contracts were terminated and therefore needed lawyers to resolve their problems, and shelters for temporary housing. The intensified interaction between DD and other NGOs

indicates that 'religious' and 'secular' NGOs have shared an interest in addressing the same issues, which is the protection of migrant workers. The phenomenon can also be seen in Indonesia, where DD and other Muslim philanthropic organizations have established a partnership for humanitarian missions in disaster-affected areas.

Compared to Islamic associations, it appears that secular workers' movements such as the IMWU are more progressive in building awareness of how to represent workers' interests. These workers' movement can voice aspirations and rights by engaging other workers' movements in Hong Kong. Slogans used by the IMWU to carry their message to the authorities (both those in Hong Kong and the Indonesian government) are also stronger than those voiced by Islamic associations. While Islamic charitable associations and movement NGOs have their own way of overcoming domestic workers' problems, cooperation between charitable associations and 'movement NGOs' has taken place, characterizing the dynamic relationships between these two types of associations. In the Ramadan month of 2011, Dompot Dhuafa, the IMWU, *Liga Pekerja Migrant Indonesia* (Indonesian Migrant Workers League), and others organized a seminar entitled: *Dengan Semangat Ramadan Melawan Perbudakan Modern untuk Mewujudkan Perlindungan Sejati bagi BMI* (With the Spirit of Ramadan [we] Fight Against Modern Slavery in Order to Provide a Comprehensive Protection for Indonesian Domestic Workers).

CONCLUSION

This article argues that effort to contextualize *zakat* practices among Indonesian Muslims has become increasingly dynamic overseas, energized by the increasing social and economic problems of migrants abroad. The increase in number of the dispatch of Indonesian women to the domestic sector overseas has stimulated Islamic philanthropic organizations such as DD to reinterpret the basic concept of *zakat* beneficiaries. Innovation in interpreting the meaning of *ibn sabil* by DD activists indicates that the social concern of social activists in Indonesia in proposing new concepts of *zakat* beneficiaries has surpassed religious authorities in the country. As a matter of fact, religious authorities, including MUI pays less attention to the current issues. DD has utilized the 'language of religion' as a discursive center in constructing notions of empowering migrant workers. The use of religious language to address social issues and to envisage a better community is a common phenomenon within Islamic associations. By using religious symbols and narratives which cope with individual piety, community, and Islamic solidarity, as well as by providing healthcare, shelters, and education, DD believes that a better quality of life for the oppressed (*mutad'afin*), in this case female migrant workers, can be created, although with very limited results, and the aggravation of the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the oppressed can be prevented.

It should also be noted that as a philanthropic organization, DD has been able to establish partnerships with NGOs and groups of Indonesian people in Hong Kong in addressing various problems. It has functioned not only as a welfare provider and aid giver for those 'unfortunate' migrant workers but has also increased the participation of 'fortunate' migrant workers to aid social entrepreneurship and charity activities for migrant workers. DD's sustainability in Hong Kong and migrant volunteers' enthusiastic supports to DD activities indicate that the organization has gained reception

from Indonesian migrants overseas as indicated by vibrant engagement and active participation of migrant workers in DD activities in the shelter (office) as well as by the willingness of migrants to donate. The increase in funds collected by DD every year in Hong Kong, which in turn is dispensed to finance migrant activities, also suggests that what is to be called 'diaspora philanthropy' among Indonesian migrant workers, works well. The increasing participation of migrant workers in Islamic philanthropy indicates that Islamization in many respects has taken place in Hong Kong and at the same time shows that many migrants benefited economically from their presence in Hong Kong. Solidarity in the form of sending money to their home country can be seen among migrants to supports social, religious, and educational activities in Indonesia. This means that reinterpretation of *zakat* has had a profound impact on the pattern of Islamic philanthropy, especially among migrant workers as they have participated in resolving problems in their home country.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments as well as the interviewed migrant workers in Hong Kong and Lily Dorianty Purba from the Asian Migrant Center for their valuable information and help during my research in Hong Kong.

Analyzing International Migrant Responses to Crisis Situations in the Context of Floods in Thailand

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► Sakulsri, T., Tadee, R., & Trupp, A. (2017). Analyzing international migrant responses to crisis situations in the context of floods in Thailand. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 257-264.

The 2011 floods in Thailand were one of the most devastating disasters in the history of the country and affected migrants in several regions. The purpose of this paper is to analyze migrant responses in crisis situations and to assess the impact of the 2011 floods on migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The authors argue that such migrant groups have a weaker social, economic, and political position when compared with local (non-migrant) groups and are thus facing particular vulnerabilities in crisis situations. This paper is based on desk research and empirical data collection consisting of 55 semi-structured interviews.

Keywords: Crisis; Floods; Migrants; Thailand; Vulnerability



INTRODUCTION

The results presented in this paper derive from the larger European Union-funded project *Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC): Supporting an Evidence-Based Approach for Effective and Cooperative State Action* which focuses mainly on post-crisis issues, primarily on the situations after a specific crisis event, including both natural disasters and civil unrest (Hendow, Pailey, & Bravi, 2016). While the overall MICIC Thailand project analyzes the response to the crisis by different stakeholders including government authorities, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations (Bravi et al., 2017), this article predominantly discusses experiences of and responses by members of migrant communities in a flood crisis context.

In 2011, Thailand suffered its worst flooding in more than a half century. The floods, which lasted from July 2011 to January 2012, affected more than six million hectares of land in 66 of the country's 77 provinces and impacted more than 13 million people (World Bank, 2012). The flooding was categorized as a *level 4* which is the highest level on the country's disaster management scale. Several factors caused the flood situation in Thailand. These factors include the tropical storms coming late in the rainy season, poorly planned infrastructure, land filling for urban/commercial and industrial growth, degraded water canals in urban areas, and construction along river banks. At the time of the flood, approximately 3.5 million migrant workers were living in Thailand (Benfield, 2011) with the majority of them from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR. According to the official statistics reported by UNDP and the World Bank, as of September 2011, over

870,000 migrants (excluding unregistered migrant workers) lived and worked in provinces that were affected by the floods. However, despite the lack of statistical information on the undocumented migrants, it was noted that up to around one million migrants (including both documented and undocumented) were working and living in the flooded areas as estimated by the Ministry of Labour (Koser, 2014). Migrant workers in Thailand are particularly vulnerable groups in crisis situations, primarily because of their political and socioeconomic status in Thailand (Bravi et al., 2017). A crisis can be defined as “a situation faced by an individual, group or organization which they are unable to cope with by the use of routine procedures and in which stress is created by sudden change” (Booth, 2015, p. 86). Against this background, this paper analyzes migrant responses in crisis situations and examines the impact of the 2011 floods in Thailand on migrants from Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

THE MIGRATION CONTEXT

Thailand has experienced a transformative process of shifting from a rural-based to an urban-based society and to an export-oriented and labor intensive economy with higher incomes and wage levels than most neighboring countries. This has led to a growing demand for low-skilled labor, especially from Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam (Huguet & Punpuing, 2005). In spite of this high demand for migrant labor, Thailand features restrictive employment regulations for low-skilled migrants (Sciortino & Punpuing, 2009). This lack of formal regulation created many informal migration channels and “subversive mobilities” (Cohen, Cohen, & Li, 2017) – often supported by brokers or smugglers – to bring unregistered migrants to the country.

Over the past 25 years, major policy changes affecting the administration of migrant workers have taken place (Chamchan & Apipornchaisakul, 2016). Migration and registration policies shape the legal statuses of Thailand’s migrant population according to the following categories (Archanvanikul, 2014): 1) unregistered / registered migrant workers without work permits, 2) registered migrant workers with work permits, 3) registered migrants who are approved by the Nationality Verification (NV) program, and 4) migrant workers who entered the country under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The first two groups are considered to be irregular migrant workers (the first one because they do not have a work permit and the second group because of their incomplete National Verification), while the third group includes migrants regularly living in Thailand, but may comprise regular or irregular workers depending on whether their employment is authorized or not. The migrants included in the last group are considered to be regular migrant workers (Sasiwongsaroj, 2014). The criteria of the migrants’ status ranging from undocumented to the obtainment of a temporary work permit and the formal channels of NV or a MoU is important as it impacts the freedom of movement as well as the migrants’ general rights in Thailand. Undocumented migrants can be detained when crossing provincial or national borders if they are stopped by police or immigration officials and thus constitute the most vulnerable group.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA SAMPLE

The MICIC project was conducted in collaboration between the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). IPSR acted as local research partner in Thailand and conducted the majority of the interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interview guidelines were developed covering interview themes such as socio-demographic background, migration experience, legal status, realization of and information about the floods, migrant responses, role of family and relatives left-behind, employer's response, response and reactions of others within Thailand, unequal treatment, and future plans. The guidelines were translated into the native languages and the interviewers translated into respondents' language where appropriate during the interview. The fieldwork was carried out from March 27 until June 28, 2016 and took place in those provinces (Samut Sakhon, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Ayutthaya) that were highly affected by the floods and that featured a high concentration of migrant populations from the four neighboring countries (Beesey, Limsakul, & McDougall, 2016). A total of 55 migrants from Myanmar (28 respondents), Lao PDR (6), Cambodia (11), and Vietnam (10) were interviewed in-depth. About one quarter of respondents in this study hold only a passport or a national identification card but no work permit for Thailand.

RESPONSES TO AND IMPACTS OF THE CRISIS

This section discusses how migrants perceived, experienced, and responded to the 2011 crisis situation. Migrants' responses can be divided – according to the time frame – into migrants' responses before, during, and after the flood event. This paper, however, focuses on migrant responses *during* the flooding and presents selected findings in the following paragraphs.

Deciding to Stay

The majority of the interviewed migrants stayed in Thailand throughout the crisis time. The reasons for not returning home during the flood are manifold and relate to the following factors: Moving across provinces was risky for undocumented migrants as they feared arrest; travelling home during the crisis was difficult due to the partial shutdown of roads in the flooded areas as well as the expensive nature of transportation, and the migrants interviewed reported that hardly any assistance for returning home was available or offered to them; migrants underestimated the severity of the flood and then it became too difficult to leave once the floods struck. Finally, fear of losing their jobs and sources of income also deterred migrants from leaving because they either had debt to pay or they did not want to return home; some stayed because they could earn extra money working during the floods. The size of migrants' households in Thailand also played a role in their decision to return, as travelling was more complicated and costly: "I did not think about moving back to Myanmar. My family was here. Also, transportation is way too expensive for all of us" (Female migrant from Myanmar aged 34).

Desk research, on the other hand, illustrates that several thousand migrants returned to their home countries because of the floods. According to migrant workers groups, thousands of migrants from Myanmar evacuated flooded industrial parks in the provinces of Ayutthaya, Nakhon Sawan, Nakhon Pathom, and Pathum Thani in the second half of 2011 (Undocumented workers exploited post-floods, 2011). In November 2011, aid workers estimated that about 600,000 migrant workers were stranded due to the floods (Koser, 2014). IOM reported that the flood crisis of 2011 forced many migrant workers in Thailand to flee flood-affected areas and return to their respective countries of origin (Huguet & Chamrathirong, 2011).

Preparedness and Awareness

The risk perception of migrants before the flood is mainly related to information and awareness about the crisis. In terms of information and awareness about the 2011 floods, migrants can roughly be divided into two groups. First, several interviewed migrants stated that they were surprised by the floods and only realized the severity when they had already happened.

Actually, I had no idea. I went to work on that day and nobody informed me or warned me about the flood. Until I came back from work, the flood had already attacked the market. I was completely shocked (Female migrant from Cambodia aged 24).

The lack of information and preparedness pertained especially to migrants unable to read and speak Thai (exclusion due to language barriers) and to those who were not embedded in a Thai social environment (segregation by ethnicity or nationality and socioeconomic factors). Migrants without registration or work permits tended to stay at their workplace or home to avoid problems. These migrants knew very little of what was going on in their host country because they lacked a social network, were unable to understand Thai, were without access to radio or TV, and rarely went out. During the floods, information was broadcasted via radio and TV and also spread by megaphone in the main streets by volunteers or aid workers. Thus, many migrants missed important information. They had a lower perception of the danger.

The second category refers to migrants who can understand and communicate in Thai and are socially better integrated into Thai society. They were better informed and demonstrated a stronger awareness of and preparedness for the floods, having received the news from various media, from their employers, and other people they talked to. Interviewed migrants stated that they thus tried to protect their homes, blocking them from the floods. They also tried to secure their valuables and bought a stock of food and drinking water beforehand.

Moving Within Thailand

As the water had begun to submerge their places of residence, the common immediate responses among most respondents included moving (oneself as well as one's belongings) to an upper floor or a friend or relative's house. Moving was a common

approach adopted by migrants who were affected by the flood. While some chose to return to their home country at the time of the flood, others moved to other areas in Thailand that were not flooded. The different strategies of moving within Thailand ranged from moving to a higher floor within the same house or building, moving to friends' houses or apartments in other areas, to moving to available government shelters. Some migrants also mentioned using higher elevated areas such as bridges as temporary shelter during the flood.

Experiences of Unequal Treatment and (Fear of) Discrimination

Generally, migrant respondents reported having experienced more discrimination in everyday life in Thailand than during the flood. Even though interviewees stated that they did not experience discrimination during the flood due to their national, ethnic or migrant status, the research team documented cases of denial of assistance by assistance groups and member of the Thai mainstream society dependent on these statuses.

Discrimination outside the flood context occurred in various everyday life situations. Interview partners reported daily life situations where Thai people did not want to have food with migrant workers, did not want to sit in the bus next to them, and generally disrespected them, including situations where they experienced discrimination and unequal treatment in terms of income.

I tell you the truth that I have been staying here for 16 years; I have never felt that I have a citizenship here. ... I said the truth that although I and (other) laborers are good people, nobody respects us (Male migrant from Vietnam aged 50).

Although the majority of respondents state that the level of discrimination they experienced during the flood crisis was lower than during 'outside-flood' contexts, some discrimination and unequal treatment based on legal status, national background, race-physical appearance, and language could be identified: "Yes. (I was discriminated against), the Thai people who came for distributing donations didn't give me the life aid bags because I am a migrant" (Female migrant from Vietnam aged 44).

Especially when personal 'crisis situations during the flood crisis' appeared, the vulnerability of undocumented migrants became obvious. For instance, an undocumented migrant from Cambodia had her belongings stolen by her landlord during the crisis. Due to the combination of being a migrant and lacking documentation/legal status in Thailand, she did not dare to report her case to the police. Moreover, Myanmar migrants reported cases of detainment of undocumented migrants who tried to cross provincial or international borders during the crisis.

Crisis as Chance

While the flood created many obstacles for affected migrants, this paper also aims to shed light on positive experiences of migrants as well as on migrants' *agency* and contributions during the crisis time. First, for a few of the respondents, the crisis situation opened the opportunity for new experiences and even constituted some kind

of entertainment, fun or diversion from everyday working life, at least in its initial stages. One undocumented migrant from Myanmar knew that there would not be any ID checks in his area during the flood situation. Therefore, when the water was still high he swam out through the floods to a large supermarket, an area he would usually not dare to visit out of fear of arrest by Thai authorities (personal communication, male migrant from Myanmar aged 26).

Second, for a minority of interviewees the flood brought about economic benefits. Although some migrants were not able to continue working during the flood, some even found additional jobs and turned the crisis situation into an opportunity. Before and at the beginning of the flood crisis, many migrants were hired to help by moving belongings to higher/elevated places where they would not be damaged by the flood. And when the flood subsided, they were once again hired to help clean up the houses.

Third, situations of crisis do not only show the vulnerability of migrants but also their agency and their contributions to crisis management efforts. Migrants contributed to tackling the crisis before, after, and during the flood. They supported the building of walls that protected houses and factories before the flood and supported the clean-up and reconstruction processes after the flood. Furthermore, respondents also mentioned that they gained a sense of belonging during the crisis as they were able to help Thai people and felt more included.

Do you know, I even helped the soldiers and Thai citizens to make anti-flood dams. I lived like a Thai citizen and I felt that I have responsibility to support neighbors to prevent the flood (Male migrant from Vietnam aged 50).

However, the same interviewees who mentioned this newfound inclusion or sense of belonging also noted that it could not be sustained after the floods. On the contrary, these migrants actually perceived a return to old patterns of everyday exclusion from Thai society after the crisis.

CONCLUSION

The present research shows that due to language barriers, lack of social embeddedness and underestimation of the impact of the impending floods, migrants were inadequately prepared for the crisis. Most of the migrants interviewed stayed in Thailand during the emergency as they lacked the means to return to their country of origin, feared arrest due to their undocumented status or they did not consider returning an option because their livelihoods were based in Thailand. Forms of migrant discrimination were reported before, during, and after the flood crisis. Results also show that social relations on local and translocal level help coping with hazards (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

At the same time, a minority of interviewed migrants turned the crisis into an opportunity to earn additional income while their jobs and regular incomes were suspended. Some also felt more included and better embedded into the Thai community as they played crucial roles in helping to tackle the flood. The situation had therefore increased their sense of belonging and portrayed migrants as not only victims but also agents at the time of the flood.

Further developments and outputs of the Migrants in Countries in Crisis project can be accessed through the project website: <http://research.icmpd.org/projects/migration-governance/micic/>



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project *Migrants in Countries in Crisis: Supporting an Evidence-based Approach for Effective and Cooperative State Action* was funded from the European Union under the grant agreement from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The findings are based on the project report by Bravi, A., Schaur, K., Trupp, A., Sakulsri, T., Tadee, R., Apipornchaisakul, K., & Punpuing, S. (2017). *Migrants in Countries in Crisis. Thailand Case Study. Migration and Natural Disasters – The Impact on Migrants of the 2011 Floods*, Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

Qatari Philanthropy and Out-of-School Children in South-east Asia: An Interview With the Director of Educate A Child

Michael Morrissey

► Morrissey, M. (2017). Qatari philanthropy and out-of-school children in Southeast Asia: An interview with the director of Educate A Child. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 265-270.

In September 2015, the UN agreed on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2017). Embedded in this broad goal, Educate A Child (EAC) is the only global support program that focuses solely on out-of-school children¹ (OOSC) across the world, including Southeast Asia. EAC is an initiative of the Education Above All Foundation of Qatar. It works through co-funding interventions of trusted partners to bring OOSC into quality primary education programs. It pairs with organizations to support innovative programs and methods of education for the most vulnerable children, especially those affected by poverty, conflict, natural disaster, and cultural barriers. EAC’s partners range from international educational, development, and humanitarian organizations to locally-based groups. It currently has around fifty partners, also in Southeast Asia, among others, Aide et Action and its 25-NGO consortium in Cambodia, the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG), Save the Children, UNESCO, UNHCR, and United World Schools. Dr. Mary Joy Pigozzi is Executive Director of EAC and member of the WISE Prize Committee.

Keywords: Out-of-School Children; Primary Education; Qatari Philanthropy; SDG4; Southeast Asia

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MICHAEL MORRISSEY: *Dr. Pigozzi, how did you come to direct the Educate A Child program?*

MARY JOY PIGOZZI: The Educate A Child program was launched in fall 2012 by its founder, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. At the time, progress towards Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG2) calling for universal primary education by 2015, had stagnated. Early progress during the period 2000-2008 was realized by the hundreds of countries that agreed to this goal, however, 60 million children world-wide remained out of primary school in 2011 and progress towards the goal had slowed. In 2010, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser was appointed an Advocate for MDG2 by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. As such, and along with her history of supporting education in Qatar, she committed to reaching 10 million out-of-school children and launched the program Educate A Child (EAC) to achieve this goal. A new foundation, Education Above All, was set up to manage EAC along with other international education

1 According to EAC estimations, there are currently about 61 million children who have not received school education at primary level (Educate a Child, 2017).

programs of Qatar. Early in 2012, I was approached by a representative from Qatar. They knew about some of my accomplishments and considered me as a prospective candidate to head the new EAC. Although I was very happy in my former position, the more I learnt about the scope, ambition, and potential of EAC, the more attractive it became. In the end, it was a challenge and an opportunity that I could not resist. I arrived in Qatar as Director at the start of the new program in late 2012.

MORRISSEY: How does EAC determine which countries to prioritize?

PIGOZZI: EAC embarked on an extensive analysis of the global OOSC landscape. Reaching 10 million children is a daunting goal to achieve in a few years. So we began by identifying countries with significant numbers of OOSC according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics data-base. Nevertheless, as a global program, EAC did not prioritize any region. Our singular focus remains OOSC. EAC supports activities that seek to eliminate the multiple barriers that keep children out of school such as poverty, lack of or distance to education opportunities, challenges resulting from conflict or displacement, gender and other forms of discrimination, poor educational quality, etc. We co-fund partners who have demonstrated that they understand the barriers children face and have identified ways to overcome these barriers and enable OOSC to enter and complete a primary education program. It does not have to be formal education – we also support a range of alternative modalities to fit the needs of different groups of learners.

MORRISSEY: Why is Southeast Asia a region of emphasis?

PIGOZZI: Southeast Asia made enormous strides in basic education during the period of the MDGs. Nevertheless, differences in development levels among ASEAN countries remain. Within many Southeast Asian countries, swathes of poverty persist and, as a result, several million poor and marginalized children do not have access to primary education. Our decision to support countries in this region was based on data that indicated the need. There are also other reasons why this region was of interest. One is that EAC is very keen on supporting innovative models that are designed to meet the learning needs of the most marginalized and bringing them to scale. This region has a good record of innovation in education. Another reason is that many of the countries are undergoing population growth at quite high rates and we are aware that this will put pressure on the provision of primary education. We hope that our work can diminish the possible negative impact of this pressure on the most disadvantaged in the region.

MORRISSEY: How does EAC go about working with countries?

PIGOZZI: EAC's partnership process is based on respect for the knowledge and understanding local organizations have of the barriers and challenges that children face in sub-regions. OOSC are not uniformly scattered about entire countries but tend to be in pockets of geographic, social, and economic strife. This approach is a critical aspect of how EAC works. We are a genuine partner who is engaged in the same goal to reach OOSC. We are not as a donor or charity prescribing what local organiza-

tions should do. Therefore, EAC seeks partners who demonstrate success in reaching marginalized children at the primary level in a country and invest in broadening and scaling up their outreach. EAC has consciously attempted to work with a range of implementing partners. We support multi-lateral organizations, international NGOs, and national NGOs. In every case, we expect our partners to align and coordinate with national authorities. In Cambodia, for example, the Minister of Education assumed the chair of the coordinating committee of the NGO consortium established in response to EAC's offer of support.

MORRISSEY: What funding model does EAC use?

PIGOZZI: EAC believes that sustainability of any given intervention relies on ownership and investment of the country and local partner. Therefore, the funding model is a 50:50 proposition. With Qatari funds covering 50%, the local partner provides at least 50% of the total project funding. Not only has this model worked across the world, but also partners have become creative in their approach to providing their share by tapping into a variety of sources such as donors, host governments, private sector, foundations, and individual philanthropists. In addition, to receive EAC funding a partner must demonstrate that it has a plan to sustain attention to OOSC once EAC funding is no longer available.

MORRISSEY: How is EAC support allocated in the Southeast Asia region?

PIGOZZI: EAC is supporting projects in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, and Malaysia, reaching around 300,000 OOSC by 2018. The projects vary according to OOSC's needs. One project in Thailand supports a refugee camp for displaced children from Myanmar. The consortium of NGOs in Cambodia is reaching children who face various barriers such as disability and urban poverty. Another one focuses on remote ethnic minority children in communities that have never had any access to a school. EAC does not allocate specific funding amounts to countries or regions. Its financial allocations respond to need as demonstrated in a rigorous application process. Thus, several partners may be supported in a single country using different approaches and focusing on different barriers faced by OOSC.

MORRISSEY: How does EAC know it has reached such large numbers of children?

PIGOZZI: EAC has a strong and robust monitoring and evaluation system to record the number of children reached. Each project we fund must submit extensive technical, financial, and monitoring reports every six months. Projects submit an online data report on numbers of OOSC reached by each school or alternative education program, and whether these children stay in the school or education program over time. EAC requires partners to track each individual student it enrolls by ID (not by estimation). This requirement was put in place for two reasons: First, because marginalized children are hard to identify and reach, and secondly, because EAC is interested to know if our investment is yielding the intended result, namely that OOSC are given the opportunity to learn and participate in the full cycle of primary education.

MORRISSEY: How does EAC determine if the education the children receive is of high quality?

PIGOZZI: That is an important question! Quality is as critical as access because the goal is for children to learn. EAC has very strict standards and criteria for the selection of partner organizations. Potential partners must show how their strategies, interventions, models, approaches, and instructional methodologies result in children staying in school and learning. Proposals that are not able to demonstrate quality education interventions are not funded. We conduct site-monitoring visits to assure ourselves of the quality of education the enrolled OOSC are receiving.

MORRISSEY: What has EAC accomplished so far?

PIGOZZI: EAC is supporting 51 projects in 48 countries in Southeast Asia, East Asia, the MENA, Africa, and the Latin America and Caribbean regions. The status of the program accomplishments is continually being updated, therefore at the point of this interview (September, 2017), commitments are in place to reach more than 7.5 million OOSC world-wide, with over 5.3 million of them already enrolled. EAC's financial commitment to date stands at over USD 548 million, with additional leveraged funds of more than USD 817 million in partner co-funding. The total funding for EAC projects now exceeds USD 1.3 billion for our entire portfolio.

MORRISSEY: What do you see as the main challenges to successful program implementation?

PIGOZZI: We have been fortunate that most of the partners have been able to exceed the targets that they had set for themselves. Having said that, however, there are several challenges that partners face. Conflict has broken out in several of the countries where we work resulting in delays and, in most cases, the need to re-program the intended activities to fit the new context. Fortunately, this has not been the case in Southeast Asia. A significant proportion of our funding goes to projects for refugees and displaced children. The frequent need for these children to be mobile has presented data collection and learning continuity problems. As we require partners to monitor and report on individual children, this has been difficult for some of our partners who were not used to such rigorous data reporting requirements. Finally, I would add that, in some cases, due to challenging or changing financial circumstances, some partners struggle to maintain their co-funding commitment.

MORRISSEY: How does EAC communicate information on its program?

PIGOZZI: Our portfolio of projects is accessible through the EAC website, www.educateachild.org.qa. There you will find individual project descriptions, profiles of implementing organizations, a map showing the locations of projects across the world, stories of children and how they have been impacted, and news about EAC's role in the global education community. Our funder and patron, Her Highness Sheikha Moza, hosts an international conference in Doha every other November – the World Innovation Summit in Education (WISE) – where world leaders, academics, partner

organizations, and the private sector gather to share ideas and offer solutions to the world's pressing problems in education. Southeast Asia is always well represented. EAC also publishes reports, studies, fact sheets, brochures, and success stories. These are disseminated at international meetings and conferences and through our website.

MORRISSEY: *What is the future direction of EAC?*

PIGOZZI: As you may know, the Millennium Development Goals were set for the period of 2000-2015. They have been extended through the Sustainable Development Goals, approved by the UN in 2015, and carry the global agenda up to the year 2030. SDG 4 focuses on education, and EAC is positioned to extend this focus to marginalized children and their right to a quality basic education.

MORRISSEY: *What does this mean for the Southeast Asia region?*

PIGOZZI: EAC funds multi-year projects so our footprint in the Southeast Asia region will continue for several more years. In addition, at the policy and advocacy level, there is movement towards pan-ASEAN agreements on reaching all OOSC in the region.

MORRISSEY: *How can others become involved?*

PIGOZZI: EAC welcomes implementing partners and funding partners to the table. Research shows that more highly educated populations result in better socio-economic and health indicators for the country, and a higher quality of life for individuals and communities. There is a page on the EAC website entitled 'How to Become a Partner' with details on procedures. Investors and organizations are invited to consider participating in this worthwhile endeavor.

MORRISSEY: *Thank you for sharing the accomplishment of EAC over such a short period of operation! Southeast Asian children have clearly benefited from Qatari philanthropy.*

PIGOZZI: It was a pleasure to speak about EAC and the importance of the Southeast Asia region in our program. Her Highness, and by extension EAC, are passionate and committed about the right of children to opportunities to reach their full potential. It is good for them individually, good for their families, good for the community, and good for the country. Everybody wins!



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SEA Junction: Our Venue to Connect on Southeast Asia

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► McCormick, P. (2017) SEA Junction: Our venue to connect on Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 271-274.

The *Southeast Asia Junction* (SEA Junction) is a 'knowledge venue', an event space, a hub, a gallery, and a library with the goal of fostering understanding and appreciation of Southeast Asia, from arts and crafts to the economy, politics, and development. As a space, SEA Junction provides knowledge resources and promotes exchanges among students, specialists, and the general public. SEA Junction opened its doors on 15 May 2016 in the *Bangkok Arts and Culture Center* (BACC) in the *Siam* area of downtown Bangkok. The BACC holds a strategic location close to major universities and is easily accessible to the general public and visitors. The physical space is an open library or 'reading room' for books in English and regional languages; work stations also let visitors use online resources. The space is not all books: arts and crafts from around the region decorate the space and show visitors some of its cultural richness, from papier-mâché figures from the Philippines and Burma to the paintings of emerging regional artists.

Making resources available is the first priority of SEA Junction, an 'intellectual salon' open to all and free of charge. Anyone can come and have a cup of coffee or tea, take a look at the books, browse art objects, and participate in activities such as lectures and workshops. Staff and volunteers operate the reading room six days a week (from Tuesdays to Sunday). So far, the library features more than 1,300 books, most of which have been catalogued, in addition to a sizeable e-library. SEA Junction maintains an online presence through its website www.seajunction.org, which also provides a space for photographic essays and opinion pieces. Through the website, Facebook, and twitter, SEA Junction gathers and shares information on conferences, courses, and fellowships of interest to academics and practitioners. Underlying SEA Junction is the idea of networking: both for users and for people who share their knowledge and experience through lectures, books or other modes of communication. This is a space for all kinds of people to make personal contacts, whether they are artists, intellectuals or representatives of groups and organizations, from the region itself or from elsewhere.

A great priority of SEA Junction is on events; from photographic exhibitions to panel discussions, to show the richness of the region and also the challenges it faces. SEA Junction is thus neither wholly about arts and culture, nor about development, politics, or economics. Being in Bangkok provides a central location within Southeast Asia for exchanges amongst people from the region and beyond. Music performances and film screenings have profiled emerging artists, intellectuals, and practitioners from the region, while Southeast Asia-related events have featured both ASEAN-wide phenomena, such as migration, medical tourism, human rights, and country-specific events which would normally be

difficult to find outside their countries of origin. The larger meeting spaces of the BACC also allow SEA Junction to offer more formal programs, including meetings, seminars, lectures, and large exhibitions.

In the last year alone, SEA Junction has held public lectures, including: 'In Search of Social Justice along the Myanmar and China Oil and Gas Pipeline', 'Chinese Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Blessing for All?', and 'LGBT Rights Under Siege in Indonesia'. Photo exhibitions have included 'Harsh Life on Shore: Migrant Workers in the Thai Fishing Industry', and 'Facing Trance in Indonesia'. For music, there were *angklung* classes and a concert of the *Bang Khnai* music band. One of the documentary screenings was of '*Pulau Buru: Tanah Air Beta*' ('Buru Island: My Homeland') and involved talks by director Rahung Nasution and producer Whisnu Yonar. Other events included potluck parties, mini book fairs, and book launches, while some such as classes for students fell under the rubric of 'outreach'. Recently a group from a nursing school in Indonesia came to SEA Junction and gave a class on the impact of regional integration on health.

Behind SEA Junction stands the anthropologist and international development specialist, Dr. Rosalia Sciortino, or 'Lia', who has lived and worked in the region for the past twenty-five years. Before starting SEA Junction, Lia worked extensively in the foundation and development world, including as regional director for Asia at the *Rockefeller Foundation* in Thailand, the *International Development Research Centre* in Singapore, Senior Advisor to *AusAID* in Indonesia, and as a *Ford Foundation* officer in Indonesia and the Philippines. She has held managerial positions for projects through the Canadian and Australian governments, working on issues of health and migration. More recently, she has been teaching as an associate professor at the *Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR)* at *Mahidol University* in Bangkok, and is also a visiting professor for the *Master Course in International Development Studies (MAIDS)* at *Chulalongkorn University*. During her work and decades-long experience in Southeast Asia, Lia has seen the need for a center of exchange for the region. She has observed how those centers that do exist are only inside universities and are usually not open to the general public, Lia says.

Through my years working with the Ford Foundation, IDRC and the Rockefeller Foundation and the many programs to better understand and address emerging challenges in the region, I felt there was a gap between the production of knowledge in academic centers, international and government agencies and civil society groups and the distribution to intended beneficiaries. A lot of Southeast Asia centers are in universities, but they are not accessible to the public. More importantly, the *knowledge* is not shared widely to ensure informed public debates.

The few open venues in the region do not have a special focus on Southeast Asia and do not encourage conversations and exchanges on regional concerns between all the people involved. After the *ASEAN Economic Community* was launched in 2015, Lia saw how crucial it was to share knowledge about regional processes and their impact to ensure greater awareness. The emergence of the Economic Community represents a gradual shift among the countries and peoples of the region, who have

started thinking about their regional neighbors instead of distant, powerful countries in Europe and North America. The long-term disconnect means that people in any one country often do not have a clear understanding of the realities in the countries next door. Decades of ideology, popular media, textbooks, and curricula that emphasize historical grievances, often further distort the picture of one's neighbors.

The vision to create the SEA Junction was not Lia's alone. She shared her passion for the region, its people, and its arts and cultures with her husband O'ong Maryono, an instructor and practitioner of the Indonesian martial art, *pencak silat*. They saw the need to preserve the diversity of cultural expression that was threatened by nationalism and extremism. The two of them had also amassed a sizeable collection of local art and furniture, a reflection of their multicultural vision, and they sought a suitable venue to display it. Then O'ong died of appendix cancer in 2013. Partly to re-engage with the world after her loss, but also to commemorate her late husband and their life together, Lia decided to manifest their shared passion for the region with a place where people could experience the richness of Southeast Asia and its arts and crafts, while also learning about its realities and challenges. "Making the SEA Junction was a crucial part of the grieving process," Lia said recently.

Support from like-minded individuals has been crucial; SEA Junction is sustained through a system of 'founding partners' who donated USD 2,500 each or pledged USD 900 a year for 3 years. They come from different countries and backgrounds, but share a common interest in Southeast Asia and a readiness to share their knowledge, expertise and extensive and varied networks. SEA Junction has also benefitted from the generosity of smaller donations from individuals known as *Friends of SEA Junction*, and grants from *Partners Asia*, the *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, and the *Kennedy Foundation* of Thailand. The book collection has been built through the donation of books from many people, especially Alan Feinstein, Executive Director of the *American Indonesian Exchange Foundation* in Jakarta, who is also a former colleague and family friend. Today SEA Junction stands as a symbol of collective efforts and shared values.

Reflecting Lia's own interests and networks, many of the events have focused on Indonesia, providing a rare opportunity for people of Thailand and the rest of Mainland Southeast Asia to be exposed to their Island neighbors. At the same time, Lia is very much interested in expanding coverage of the region in all areas, and is always looking for experts and practitioners both from inside and outside the region for events. Lia, her staff, and all the founding partners of SEA Junction would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone to come and visit, make use of the library and other resources, take part in events, consider holding a lecture or workshop, or contribute to its running and activities. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact SEA Junction directly.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A previous version of this article has been published by the International Institute for Asian Studies: McCormick, P. (2017). SEA Junction: Our venue to connect on Southeast Asia, the Newsletter #78, p. 48. Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies. Retrieved from <https://iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/sea-junction-our-venue-connect-southeast-asia>.

Reflection on the Special Gender Stream: 2017 Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference

Sara Niner

► Niner, S. (2017). Reflection on the special gender stream: 2017 Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 275-279.

The special gender stream of the 6th *Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA) Conference* was co-convened by Dr Sara Niner of Monash University and Theresa Tam of the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) where the conference was held over two days from 29 to 30 June 2017. This report summarizes some of the 25 presentations which represent the key issues of political participation, gender-based violence, development, and health that are crucial for the pursuit of gender justice in Timor-Leste and how the local women's movement and aligned NGOs are attempting to achieve this. Gender equality and gender relations are growing fields of research in Timor-Leste, undertaken by a mix of academics, activists, government officers, and development practitioners (Niner, 2017) that were represented at the conference. A well-documented gender inequity is evident in post-conflict Timor-Leste as is the case in most post-war societies. Women have higher levels of malnutrition and illiteracy than men and overall women earn lower salaries, receive fewer benefits and opportunities to advance in their professional careers. The 2010 National Demographic Survey reported that a third of women have experienced physical violence from a current or former husband or partner (National Statistics Directorate [NDS], 2010). However, the acceptance of gender equality as a general principle in Timor-Leste is documented, although the deeper social change required to have equal opportunities in everyday lives is a 'work in progress', as the following report shows.

Gender relations apparent in contemporary Timorese society are the result of complex political and historical circumstances. The dominance of men in Timorese history and politics, and the legacy of militarization and conflict with neighboring Indonesia during the national struggle for independence (1974-1999), are significant issues in contemporary Timorese society that pose enormous challenges for the women's movement (Niner, 2017). In the contested world of modern Timorese history, the crucial and unique role of women during the conflict has not yet been fully acknowledged and this affects women's full and active participation in society today. Timorese women accepted that the struggle for women's rights established in the early 1970s was not possible during their long war, but the struggle depended upon women's substantial contributions and sacrifices therefore creating a pool of highly skilled and motivated women who no longer accepted the status quo. The post-conflict period has been significant for women and the struggle for gender justice in Timor-Leste. While women face cultural and political pressure to conform to patriarchal demands, after the war ended, key women leaders and women's groups have resisted this and the conference papers discussed here are evidence of that.

The opening panel, which set the agenda for the rest of the gender stream, sketched out the key political issues for women and gender relations in contemporary Timor-Leste. The panel was opened by Maria ‘Micato’ Domingas Fernandes Alves, a senior woman representative of Timor’s nationalist struggle, who provided a historical perspective on the women’s movement. As the Portuguese news agency *LUSA* reported: “Experts considered today that violence against Timorese women remains high, with patriarchal society that perpetuates gender inequality and prevents women from having access to development opportunities” (*LUSA*, 2017). ‘Micato’ Alves was only a teenager when Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and she worked behind the front lines training resistance cadres with the first East Timorese women’s organization, the Popular Organization of Timorese Women (*Organização Popular da Mulher Timorese* – OPMT), which was founded as part of the *Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor* (FRETILIN). She went on to resist Indonesian occupation in many ways and was a founder of the first women’s NGO in Timor *FOKUPERS* (celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2017).¹ The ongoing discrimination and inequality faced by Timorese women from Portuguese colonization to OPMT’s efforts during the Indonesian occupation was highlighted in her paper but her major focus was on women’s contemporary solidarity and advocacy, including the establishment of the women’s network, REDE FETO Timor-Leste in 2000, and the strategic successes of the women’s movement.²

Many of these issues were reiterated by the next speaker, Nurima Alkatiri (who was running for parliament with FRETILIN) focusing on the “high prevalence of violence against women and children, chronic malnutrition, one of the highest birth rates in the world, high rates of maternal and child mortality and low rates of women participation in the work force”. She explained how “violence against children is seen as a parenting educational mechanism, and marital rape is not even understood as a concept.” She advocated for increased programs for survivors of violence and the establishment of a new mindset that does “not accept violence and gender inequality as normal” (Alkatiri, 2017). The youngest member of the panel Berta Tilman, who had recently established, Timor’s first Feminist Network, spoke about how women are marginalized from the process of national development, giving the example of the inadequacy of programs such as the *Bolsa da Mae* (Mother’s Purse). The USD 5 per month provided per child to poor, often female headed households (about USD 9 million in total in the annual budget) was too little to shift families out of poverty, as compared to the approximately USD 100 million spent per annum on projects for war veterans. Tilman presented a graph demonstrating how public funds spent on government vehicle maintenance outweighs money invested in human resources. Evelina Inan and Mira Fonseca from local women’s NGO the Alola Foundation,

1 After national independence, Micato Alves became the advisor on gender to the Prime Minister and established the national *Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality* (SEPI) which produced several significant texts on women’s participation in the independence struggle. She became Minister for Social Solidarity but her next appointment as Minister of Defense in 2012 was rejected by the Commander of the national army.

2 These were gender equity instruments/mechanisms recognised in the constitution, CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 ratification, 2010 Domestic Violence Law, the National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence, women’s formal political participation ensured by quota system and most recently, the introduction of the social welfare payment for poor, often female headed households, the *Bolsa da Mae*.

continued with more positive research undertaken on ‘Women and Leadership’, giving suggestions on how to increase women’s participation in *suco* (local council) leadership, through training. This research was deliberately driven and conducted by Timorese women, active as co-researchers, process designers and informants ensuring contextual and cultural relevance while building research skills and ensuring ‘ownership’ over the findings.

While the East Timorese women’s movement has been highly successful at achieving strategic aims (such as the laws and quotas mentioned by Micato Alves), meeting the basic needs of women has not been as successful, particularly for poor rural women. Several presentations showed the complex challenges to improving rural women’s health and wellbeing and how entrenched customary practices might be addressed. Roumaldo Amaral and Domingos Aquino Brandao of *HAIM Health* discussed increasing nutrition and empowering rural women through cultivation and consumption of the new ‘superfood’ moringa and Joana Gusmão and Sherry Ryan discussed how the Timorese NGO *Empreza Di’ak* (good enterprise) is reviving cultural traditions with rural women to develop livelihoods in a culturally safe way. Conference co-convenor Therese Tam of UNTL analyzed the challenges of introducing and adopting healthier and more environmentally friendly stoves in the face of adherence to the customary practice of cooking over wood burning fires which have added benefits of warmth, repelling insects and integration with a local belief system. Although the women cooks might want to adopt technology because it would lessen their work burden, along with added health benefits, this significant household purchase also requires the family support of husbands and mothers who may not appreciate these benefits.

High population growth and fertility rates in Timor-Leste are linked to high rates of child and maternal mortality, making this a key issue in improving women’s status and several presentations offered insights into these challenges. Laura Burke interrogated local understandings of reproduction and how they intersected with national and international perceptions about population growth. While big families were viewed positively as assets that increased household productivity and agricultural production, rapid population growth was also a reaction to the loss of life during the war and as a way to maintain knowledge systems and create a pool of good citizens for future national development. These deep insights will assist more broadly but a more pragmatic approach proffered was Health Alliance International’s *Liga Inan* (connecting mothers) program which uses SMS technology to lower mortality rates by increasing safe birthing practices and post-natal visits. Ruben Lopes, Olinda Baptista, and Sarah Meyanathan reported that while the program was associated with these positive behavior changes, other key practices and powerful cultural beliefs had remained unchanged demonstrating the limitations of the methodology and the need for deeper understanding.

The other key issue to improving women’s status is reversing the high prevalence of domestic violence. Brett Inder and Amy Duong’s statistical modelling of national survey data (NDS, 2010) revealed the links between violence and men’s behavior described in survey responses. Men who displayed controlling behaviors and patriarchal beliefs were significantly more likely to perpetrate domestic violence, while women who accepted domestic violence were more likely to experience it. These insights were clearly linked to other findings in the gender stream. Xian Warner, Justino

Sarmiento Amaral, and Tamara Failor also presented a re-analysis of data from the *Nabilan* (to shine) survey (Asia Foundation, 2016). Clear and distinct links were found between both the experience and perpetration of violence and poor mental health such as depression and suicide. Increasing awareness of these links along with campaigns to reduce mental health stigma and 'promote non-violent ways of being a man and reduce social acceptability of men's use of violence' were suggested. A more pragmatic solution to assisting victims was presented by Guilhermina de Araujo and Livio da Conceicao Matos, from the Midwifery Department at UNTL, and Australian academic Kayli Wild, who addressed the socio-cultural context for midwives responding to violence against women in clinical settings. Although midwives offered their clients 'security from below' they themselves needed greater support to deal with the tensions between ensuring victims' rights and respecting families. Midwives suggested they needed a 'whole health facility' approach encompassing training, strong leadership, and links to communities integrated into the undergraduate health curriculum at UNTL and Ministry of Health policy.

However, the most penetrating insights into the culture surrounding gendered violence in Timor was provided from the qualitative research by Deborah Cummins and Mira Fonseca who reported on the experiences and understandings of young teenage mothers. From these narratives, the researchers concluded that young women have a lack of knowledge, choice, and agency in first sexual experiences leading to sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancies, and unhappy marriages. They found the concept of consent largely absent, with some young women unaware that their consent was even required. The acceptance of forced sex has also been found in previous studies (Asia Foundation, 2016; Niner, Wigglesworth, dos Santos, Tilman, & Arunchalam, 2013). The rights of the less powerful was another issue reported on by Anna Yang who sketched out the high rates of child abuse (over 70% for both men and women) and presented two case studies of extreme physical abuse and neglect. The vulnerability of children in informal adoption arrangements and the powerlessness of NGO's to protect the children while encountering the obstruction of government officials is a reminder of the patriarchal hierarchies of power within institutional settings that must be challenged if vulnerable people including children and women are to be protected in Timorese society. An informal discussion followed about other contexts of child abuse in Timor beyond the family, such as in schools, churches, and clubs which is another area in need of much more attention.

A general observation from the conference from both Timorese and international participants was that it provided a safe, secular space for intellectual discussions about challenging issues. The issues of gender relations discussed were crucial ones for peace, democracy, and equality in the new nation, particularly in the middle of an election campaign. TLSA has held a bi-annual conference in Dili since 2007 and many Timorese have taken up the opportunity to present at an international conference for the first time. Conference panels are presented in a mix of Timor-Leste's two national languages Tetun and Portuguese, and also in English and Bahasa Indonesian. The outcomes of the conference include peer reviewed published proceedings. This body of work now provides an archive of research material on Timor-Leste for use by all and it is freely available on their website (as below) and these proceedings are due out early 2018. The *Timor-Leste Studies Association* was established in Melbourne, Austral-

ia in 2005 to provide a network for academic researchers interested in Timor-Leste and is affiliated with the *Asian Studies Association* of Australia. For more information please visit <http://www.tlstudies.org/> and for the full 2017 Program and abstracts please visit: <http://www.tlstudies.org/Conference.html/>



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