

Advancing Women Social Entrepreneurs in ASEAN



S&P Global Foundation

Introduction

In partnership with S&P Global Foundation, Ashoka has spearheaded a regional study on Advancing Women Social Entrepreneurs in ASEAN to learn and celebrate the work of over 100 women social entrepreneurs across Southeast Asia. As one of the fastest-growing regions in the world, women drive a sizable fraction of the region's growth and yet, they are rarely celebrated as powerful changemakers.

This report features insights and impact stories from women social entrepreneurs (WSEs) doing innovative and powerful work in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. It also outlines the challenges these women had to overcome to become the women impact leaders of today. There are also bold recommendations on potential solutions and systemic change required to further unlock the potential of women social entrepreneurship in ASEAN.

This report seeks to be a call-to-action to women social entrepreneurs, key stakeholders, and their supporters from all across ASEAN to collectively re-imagine the future of women social entrepreneurship and changemaking in the region.



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Preface

About Ashoka

Ashoka builds and cultivates a community of change leaders who understand that the world now requires everyone to be a changemaker. We leverage our global networks to spur movements that transform institutions and cultures worldwide in support of changemaking for the good of society.

With more than 3,600 Fellows based in over 90 countries, Ashoka represents the largest platform for social entrepreneurs worldwide. Since its founding 36 years ago, Ashoka has provided stipends, support services, and connections to this expansive network of Fellows.

Ashoka has designed and implemented a rigorous and proven selection process to elect these leading social entrepreneurs. Our offices in 35 countries across the world receive thousands of nominations and from them, select new cohorts of Ashoka Fellows. Ashoka's venture process is an intensive one that ensures the election of only those social entrepreneurs who are truly pioneering systemic social change around the world.

We focus our efforts on sourcing and supporting social innovators who are creating change by tackling the systemic roots of challenges. These ventures are at the core of Ashoka's movement to ensure that sustainable social solutions are implemented to confront humanitarian needs worldwide and to create impactful and lasting improvements that advance the well-being of society.

About S&P Global Foundation

We support inclusive sustainable economies and thriving global communities.

S&P Global Foundation is more than philanthropy—it's making a difference by finding and developing essential connections between the knowledge and skills of S&P Global and the needs of society. We make sure the work we do maximizes opportunities to engage S&P Global's employees and has a genuine impact on the global community. We focus our efforts where we can make a real difference: Bridging the Global Skills Gap, Creating an Inclusive Economy, and Promoting a Sustainable Environment. We also support global disaster relief efforts with a focus on resiliency.

Aim of report

The goal of this report is to identify the critical gaps as well as enablers in the field of women social entrepreneurship, by focusing on:

1

How are Women Social Entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia innovating to generate social and economic value for their communities?

2

What are the key enablers that will support Women Social Entrepreneurs to scale their impact and catalyze system change?

This report is the outcome of a study of:



150
quantitative surveys
including 110 women and 40 men
social entrepreneurs from ASEAN



30 in-depth interviews

with Ashoka Fellows from
Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines
Singapore and Thailand



The quantitative and qualitative data and inputs were analyzed to arrive at key insights presented in this report that will include common barriers and challenges, recommendations on potential solutions and systemic change, as well as inspiring stories from women social entrepreneurs in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Key Demographics of the Respondents

Figure: Age of Social Entrepreneurs

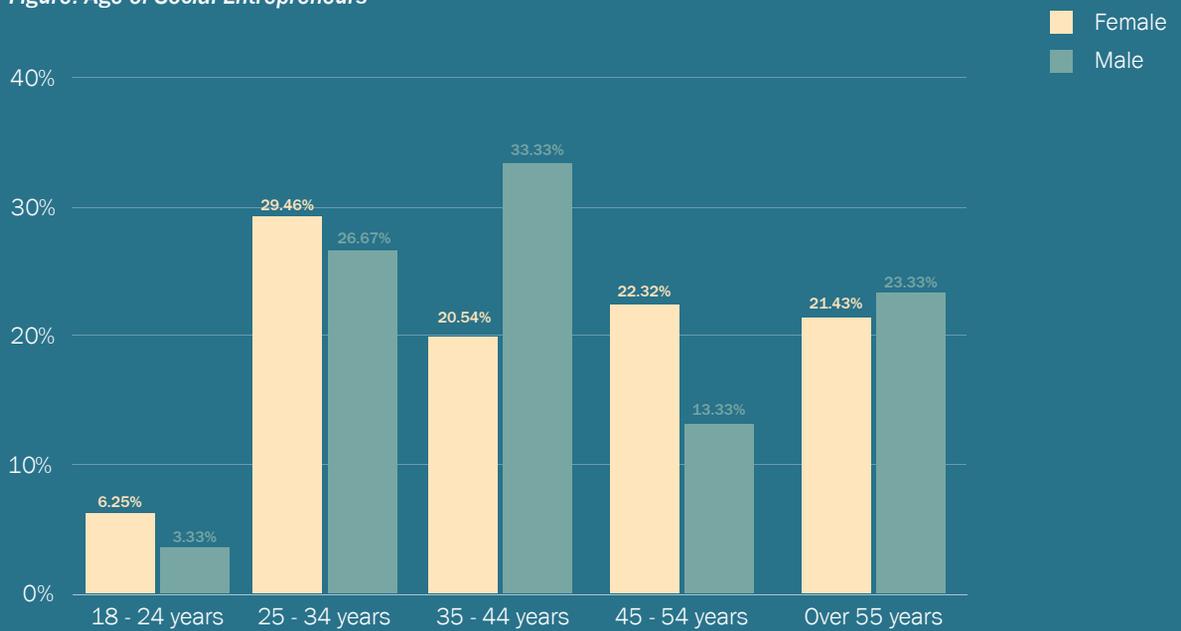


Figure: Education Level

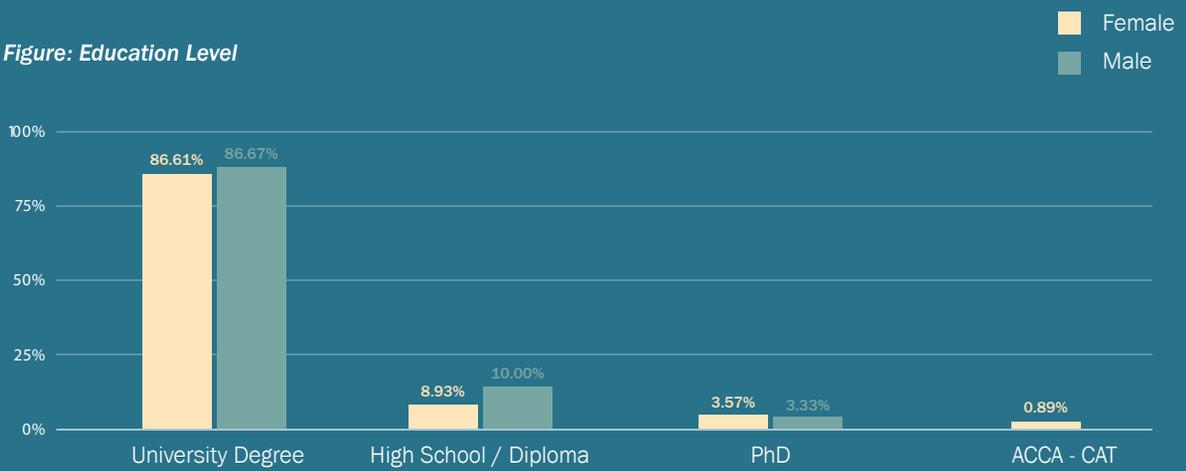
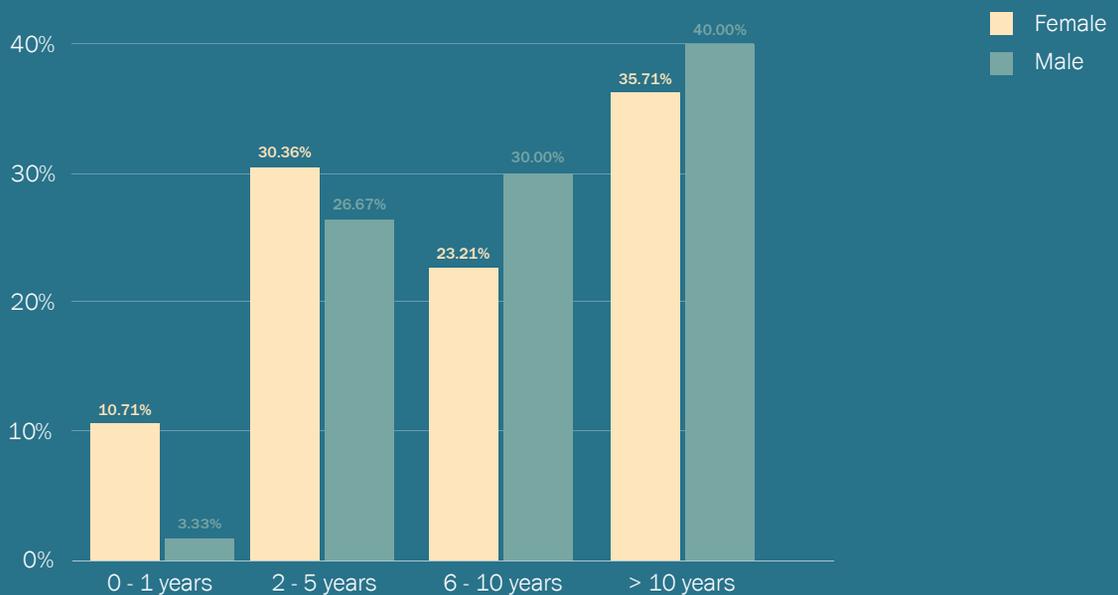


Figure: Age of Initiative



Executive Summary

Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs (WSE) are not that Different

Both Genders Focus on Similar Sustainable Development Goals

In our research, both men and women have generally similar focus across the sustainable development goals. They have education and health as their top SDG of focus, implying shared aspirations between the genders. 17.64% of women and 14.58% of men reported that they focused on education while 12.29% of women and 16.67% of men chose to work on health.

Both Genders Seek Similar Support Systems

For both women and men social entrepreneurs, personal relationships are a primary part of their support system. The surveys demonstrated that 26.20% of women and 22.83% of men rely on their personal circles.

Both Genders See Skill Development as a Key Strategy

Social entrepreneurship is a challenging space and this brings a need for constant development. Hence both genders chose skill development as a key strategy to overcome barriers with 20.86% of women and 17.65% of men choosing this.



Unique Challenges and Approaches in Women Social Entrepreneurship

WSEs Tend to Work More Towards Inclusive Communities

For both men and women social entrepreneurs, their top two primary focus is on helping those who are less educated and poor, with 18.91% of women and 19.48% of men choosing to help the less educated and 18.91% of women and 14.29% of men working to uplift the poor. However, women tend to work more towards inclusive communities along socio-cultural sensitivities and fault lines, helping those who are under-served due to their sexual orientation, religion, race and ethnicity, or language.

WSEs Have Seen Success in Replicating Their Work Internationally

Several WSEs have been pioneers in their focus areas resulting in their work crossing borders. Among the WSEs interviewed 44.44% had replicated nationally and 24.07% had replicated internationally.

Despite Decades of Impactful Work, WSE Struggle to Change Policies

Even after being able to replicate their work across regions, WSEs still struggle to bring about policy change. Getting male policymakers to listen has been a consistent struggle with 67.11% of the WSEs interviewed yet to impact policy change.

WSEs Continue to Tackle Gender Barriers

Decades of cultural conditioning has resulted in deep-rooted gender barriers for women. WSEs see this as the most difficult challenge to overcome with 10% more women (34.59%) facing gender barriers compared to men (24.39%).

Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs Approach Scaling Very Differently

Most women (18.37%) chose training as their primary approach to scaling while most men (21.25%) chose partnerships. This is reflective of women wanting to build a Changemaker society by empowering others with the right skills. The second most common approach used by women (14.97%) was organizational growth while 16.25% of men chose coalitions as the second most used approach.

Reflections for the Future

A. With the insights gained from both men and women social entrepreneurs, these are the key enablers that will help them to scale their impact:

1

Funding

To help ensure the sustainability of programs, reduce dependency on personal assets and help SEs invest in the right resources.

Potential solutions:

- Build relationships with social organizations that globally showcase the work of social entrepreneurs
- Reach out to corporates and angel investors with similar visions
- Creation of a platform to encourage conversations between social entrepreneurs and investors

2

Partnerships

To help SEs leverage each other's expertise, lobby together for collective change, generate wider impact and reduce costs cutting by sharing resources

Potential solutions:

- Social entrepreneurs should identify different categories of partnerships they might want to build. This will be based on what they intend to gain from that partnership - funding, networking, technical resources, human resources, legal advice or business advice.
- Social entrepreneurs can come together to run campaigns highlighting why partnering with them is an investment in the community.

4

Personal Self-Care

To ensure the continuity of work and sustain motivation.

Potential solutions:

- Encourage coaching sessions amongst SEs to keep their mental wellbeing in check
- Host stress management workshops that can help SEs in difficult situations
- Social entrepreneurs need to come together as a fraternity to offer socio-emotional support to each other

3

Succession Planning

To build long-term impact, create an Everyone's a Changemaker environment and involve the community.

Potential solutions:

- Host workshops for young adults to encourage social entrepreneurship with the next generation.
- Invite part-time volunteers from the community to experience social entrepreneurship first hand.
- Train founders and social entrepreneurs on strategic and intentional succession planning

5

Strategic Thinking

To generate clear and structured goals, build credibility and promote learning and growth.

Potential solutions:

- Corporate and social organizations can invest in SEs by hosting workshops on strategic planning and problem solving with their in-house talents and expertise.
- Corporates can offer pro-bono consulting and guide SE with strategic planning across a few key dimensions of the business.

B. To overcome the common challenges faced by women social entrepreneurs, these are the gender-specific support that will help them to unlock their potential:

1 A Stronger Network for Support

A platform for peer-to-peer learning, a space to forge partnerships and for emotional support

Potential solutions:

- Creation of regional WSEs networks that host regular events
- WSEs can also host their own networking sessions by invite their colleagues and encouraging them to bring other WSEs

2 Structured Mentoring Programs

To provide experience based guidance, skill development and training, motivation for young WSEs and build the “Next Generation of Changemakers

Potential solutions:

- Set regional mentor programs using a pool of senior WSEs. This can be structured to allow young WSEs to apply to be mentees
- Larger social organizations and experienced WSEs can allow younger WSEs to shadow their work and learn on the ground

4 Female Advocates Within Governments

To enable easier conversations, push for policy change, establish budgets for women’s issues, inspire future WSEs and spread awareness about important policies and rights

Potential solutions:

- Creation of an association that brings WSEs and female government officials and policymakers onto one platform
- WSEs can make a collective representation to female officials about changing biased policies

3 Increase Engagement of Stakeholders

To generate long-term sustainability of programs, better access to resources, enhance potential to drive policy change and change mindsets

Potential solutions:

- WSEs can host events and invite not just stakeholders, but members of the community as well. They can use these events to showcase their work and encourage the engagement of the community.
- Create and support multi-stakeholder engagement platforms in the region

5 Address Gender-Based Skill Differential

To help tackle specific gender barriers, make up for the lack of resources, boost their morale and inspire the next generation

Potential solutions:

- Formulate skill training for WSEs based on the unique challenges they fac
- Corporates can offer internship opportunities to young WSEs to hone their business skills

Recommended Highlights for Key Stakeholders

Social Entrepreneurs

Parts 2 and 3 include first-hand perspectives of experienced WSEs and how they successfully overcame challenges. These stories can be insightful for both genders and both aspiring and established social entrepreneurs.

Investors and Funders

Parts 2 and 3 showcase the powerful work WSEs have been doing in this region and highlight why it is important to invest in them. Part 4 details the support both men and women social entrepreneurs need and how funding can help them.

Government

Part 3 highlights the struggles of WSEs to hold conversations with policymakers and Part 4 lists what can be done to solve these issues.

Partners and other Stakeholders

Part 4 lists down various ways partners can work with social entrepreneurs for a mutually beneficial relationship.



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PART ONE

**Landscape of Women Social
Entrepreneurship in ASEAN**



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According to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, globally, women are only able to achieve 68.6% of the overall opportunities available to men in the fields of Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. By some estimates, this 31.4% gender gap will take 99.5 years to close, on average, though some regions have more pronounced gaps that will take longer to close.¹

With a general shortfall of robust policies and investment by the government and corporates, women, as 50% of a country's population, do not have equal economic opportunities. As a result, the country and its citizens are unable to reap the maximum economic and social benefits of economic inclusion.

However, there is a heartening and exciting trend of an increasing number of women social entrepreneurs (WSEs) over the last few years who are using the power of social businesses and innovative community engagement models to meet different unmet needs of the society and uplift the lives of the underprivileged.

Women Social Entrepreneurs - Catalysts of a Changemaker World

According to a report by the Hay Group, women are 45% more likely than men to display empathy consistently, outperforming men in inspirational leadership, teamwork, and adaptability.² Women social entrepreneurs leverage this strength of empathic leadership to be effective Changemakers and enablers of social change and economic growth.

Fighting COVID-19: Women Warriors in a Time of Crisis

2020 saw the COVID-19 global pandemic throw the world into chaos. Beyond a public health crisis, the deepening socio-economic fallout has also exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and revealed the weakest links in the communities around the world. However, many women leaders have shown their resilience, ingenuity and empathy to take on the mantle of leadership in serving vulnerable communities amidst the crisis.



Ellena Rachmawati, COVID-19 Care
Indonesia

In Indonesia, **Ellena Rachmawati** pivoted her existing work to help with the crisis. Ellena and her organization formed a team called COVID-19 Care in Lombok. The team has been using personal funds to provide essentials such as soap and masks to local communities during this pandemic.

Kritaya Sreesungpakit, Why I Why Foundation (YIY) Foundation
Thailand

WSEs in Thailand have also focused on keeping the mental health of people in check during these uncertain times. Kritaya Sreesungpakit from Why I Why Foundation, launched a platform to connect mental health service providers with those in need. Her platform's services range from counseling to group sessions specifically to deal with mental stress from the pandemic.



¹ World Economic Forum (2020). *Global Gender Gap Report 2020* http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

² Hay Group Division (2016). *Women Outperform Men in 11 of 12 Key Emotional Intelligence Competencies*.

<https://ir.kornferry.com/news-releases/news-release-details/new-research-shows-women-are-better-using-soft-skills-crucial>

Who are Changemakers?

Ashoka defines Changemakers as “A Changemaker is someone who is taking creative action to solve a social problem.”

Changemaking WSEs can further be described to possess the following unique traits:

- **Empathetic Perspective:** Most WSEs look at situations with an empathetic lens. They possess the ability to understand and respond sensitively to others. This is possibly because many women become caregivers at home right from a young age.
- **Inclusive Teamwork:** WSEs are strong advocates of teamwork and in ensuring everyone’s voice is heard. They often take extra effort to ensure no one is left behind. This is again possibly influenced by the roles they play at home.
- **Distinctive Leadership Style:** WSEs approach leadership in a democratic manner. As leaders, they strive to motivate by leading by example. Most WSEs have broken away from the traditional top-down approach of leadership common in Southeast Asia.
- **Creative Problem Solving:** WSEs have the knack of overcoming problems by formulating clear plans for action. Several WSEs use creative problem solving to overcome challenges such as lack of resources or policy restrictions.

Most of the WSEs interviewed in this study echoed the need for every woman to understand that she has the power to change her community. They envision a community where everyone is a Changemaker working towards the common good. WSEs believe that by building a future generation of Changemakers, they are laying the foundation for a better future. Many women entrepreneurs are mothers and their children’s primary caretakers and teachers. Research shows that a mother’s progressive parenting style in encouraging children to think and verbalize ideas is critical to the growth of young Changemakers too.

However, existing infrastructure to support the growth of women social entrepreneurs is not changing quickly enough. In this report, we find that WSEs are still:

1

Facing a lack of resources: WSEs have limited access to the social and capital resources for entrepreneurial initiatives, building networks, and scaling their impact.

Overcoming emotional and cultural challenges: Many WSEs still struggle with the emotional implications of defying social expectations. WSEs who are mothers also find it difficult to maintain a work-life balance.

2

3

Lacking a robust support network: As the rise of women social entrepreneurship is still recent, there are not as many female leaders as male leaders. This makes it difficult for budding women entrepreneurs to find female mentors to act as sounding boards or create business partnerships with.



PART TWO

**Men & Women Social Entrepreneurs
are not that Different**



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Introduction

Traditionally, men and women are found to be more different than similar to each other. However, this report has found that they have some interesting areas of similarities. **Other than being equally passionate Changemakers, the focus of men and women social entrepreneurs across the Sustainable Development Goals and the sources they seek support from are highly similar.**

A. Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs Focus on Similar Goals

Many social entrepreneurs of both genders begin their journey through personal experiences, outlooks, and grievances which inspired them to carry out their work. Social entrepreneurship is often deeply rooted in human emotion and driven by issues that are close to entrepreneurs. These similar inspirations in turn influence the sustainable development goals (SDG) they set to contribute towards.

Figure 1 : Focus on Sustainable Development Goals by Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. - The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

In our research, both men and women have generally similar focus across the sustainable development goals. As illustrated in Figure 1, both women and men have education and health as their SDG of focus, implying shared aspirations between the genders. Close to 17.64% of women and 14.58% of men reported that they focused on education while 12.29% of women and 16.67% of men chose health. One of the reasons social entrepreneurs choose to focus on these two sectors could be reflective of government policies. Several governments in the Southeast Asia region are already focused on and investing in these sectors. Hence, it is natural for social entrepreneurs to gravitate towards these areas to be aligned with the government's priorities.

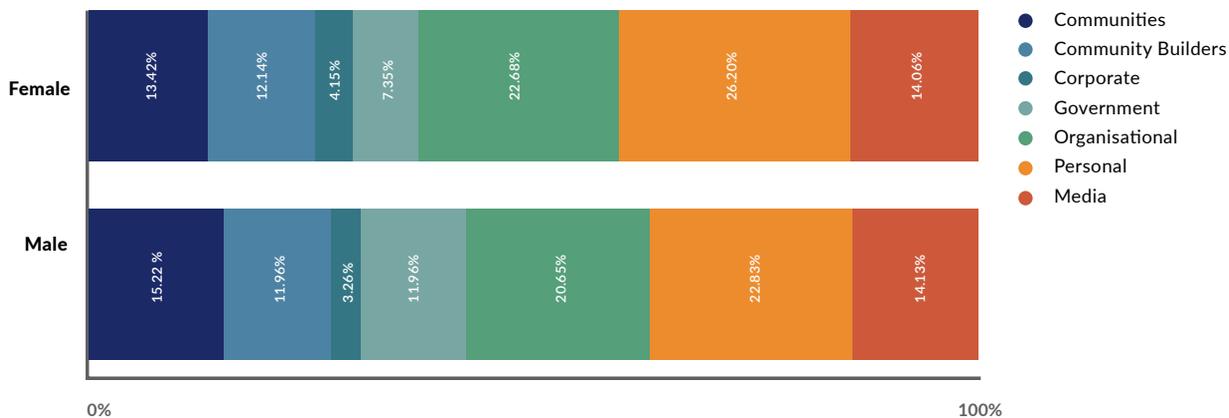


Sri Washyaningsih, Sanggar Anak Alam
Indonesia

Sri Washyaningsih's work in **Indonesia** is an example of WSEs driving change through education. Through her organization **Sanggar Anak Alam**, Sri provides an impactful and holistic education for village children. She was inspired to start Sanggar Anak Alam after witnessing school children not inculcating education and instead looking at it as just a task. She developed an alternative approach to education that was initially met with hostility from government schools but has now begun to gain acceptance. She believes that her education program provides students with the freedom to learn things that they are passionate about, thereby embracing their whole self. The focus on the whole self is what makes her program stand out from conventional education.

B. Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs Seek Similar Support Systems

Figure 2: Principal Support Systems of Women and Men Social Entrepreneurs



Much like entrepreneurs in any sector, both men and women social entrepreneurs rely on their support systems for the growth of their work. From the survey results, it is evident that both genders seek support from similar avenues, as seen in Figure 2.

For both genders of social entrepreneurs, personal relationships are a primary part of their support system. **The surveys demonstrated that 26.20% of women and 22.83% of men rely on their personal circles.** Typically, they turn to someone in their immediate family like a spouse or parent for support. In some cases, it has also been close friends. This is a trend common among social entrepreneurs, as they tend to rely on personal relationships throughout their journey. This is especially evident at the start of their journey when the impact of their work is yet to be seen by others in the ecosystem. Moreover, in a field like social entrepreneurship that can be stressful and difficult at times, personal relationships are important to keep entrepreneurs going.



Amina Swanepoel, Roots of Health
Philippines

Ashoka Fellow, **Amina Evangelista Swanepoel** of **Roots of Health** in the **Philippines** echoes this, as she attributes a large part of her success to the support she received from her family. The very idea to work in women's reproductive health was inspired by her mother. Amina learned about the alarming state of teenage pregnancies in the Philippines from her mother who was a professor at Palawan State University. She was inspired to better the lives of these young girls and women, which led to the creation of Roots of Health in partnership with her mother and husband. To this day, she sees her mother as her professional mentor as well.

Amina has been fighting the cultural taboo behind sex education for young women in the Philippines. There is a general misconception in the Philippines that giving young people sex education will result in teenage pregnancies. However, while working with these communities, Amina saw that it was the lack of sex education that was causing these teenage pregnancies. She further realized that to truly drive change, she first had to address the cultural context in which Filipina women understood reproductive rights.

In 2017, Amina's team was able to successfully meet the contraceptive needs of 17,893 women. Soon after which she also partnered with the Department of Health to provide contraceptive access to women in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

Interestingly, support from within the organization came a close second to personal relationships for both men and women, with 22.68% of women and 20.65% men stating they got support from within their organization. Social entrepreneurs tend to build deep bonds with their co-workers, especially in the space of social entrepreneurship, as colleagues tend to share similar passions and visions. Alongside this, several of the WSEs interviewed saw their organization's board of directors as mentors and sought support and guidance from them. This is only natural, as most board directors possess decades of experience and are usually a lot older than WSEs. As a result, a lot of WSEs build trust with their board of directors and see them as parent figures. This could also be attributed to the Southeast Asian custom of seeking advice from the elders in the family.





**Khemporn Wiroonrapun, Foundation for Child Development
Thailand**

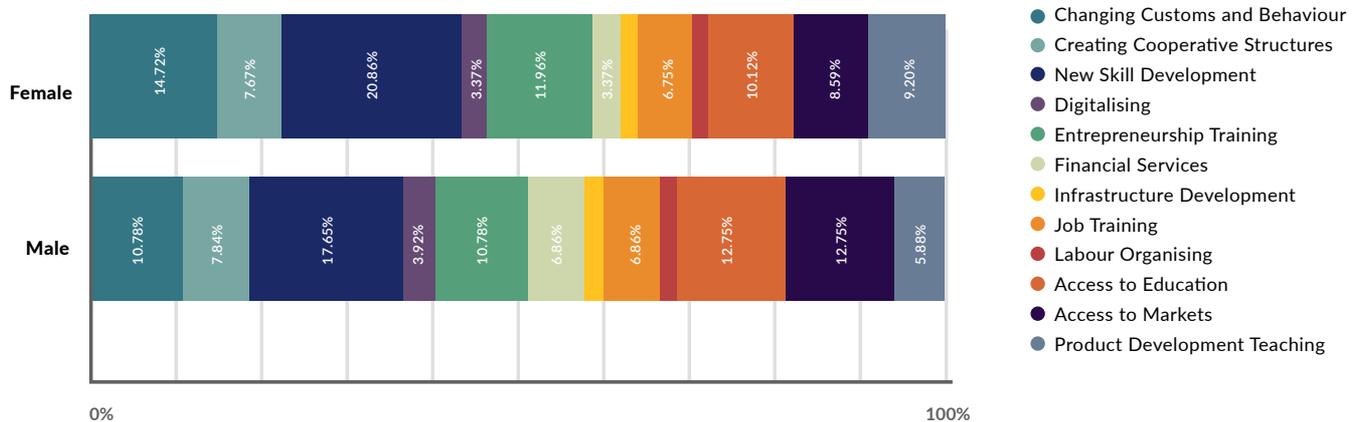
Khemporn Wiroonrapun, of the **Foundation for Child Development in Thailand** is one such WSE that attributes a large part of her success to her relationship with her board of directors. Widely known as a savior of child workers in Thailand, Khemporn has fought the problem of immigrant child labor for decades. Khemporn, along with her team, established her organization for the rescue and rehabilitation of child laborers. She was inspired by her childhood experience of observing economic disparity among her classmates.

During the initial stages of her career, Khemporn noted that it was very difficult to handle challenges and it was her support system that helped her stay motivated and continue her work to create impact. She was just 22 when she just started, and at that time, she was fighting child labor laws in Thailand, which was considered by many to be an issue that could tarnish the country’s image. As a result, she was constantly blamed by the government officials for bringing disrepute to the image of the country. Khemporn describes this as an extremely mentally stressful period.

Khemporn elaborated how during this time her board of directors (committees of her organization) consistently offered her mental support and boosted her confidence when she felt doubtful. Their encouragement has had a deep impact on Khemporn who still remembers their exact words decades later. Khemporn recollects how her board of directors assured her that as long as she had the right knowledge and understanding of the issues at hand, her age or experience did not matter and that she should stand up for the truth.

C. Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs See Skill Development as a Key Strategy

Figure 3: Strategies Deployed to Overcome Barriers



The third key similarity between both genders is the strategies used to overcome barriers. As seen in Figure 3, both men and women value new skill development as their primary strategy to create value for the community. **Among the different approaches cited, skill development was the forerunner with 20.86% of women and 17.65% of men choosing this.** Skill building is critical, not just to overcome challenges, but also to inspire more Changemakers.

Social entrepreneurs, especially the more experienced, see skill development as a powerful tool to transform mindsets. In this context, what entrepreneurs see as skills range from technical matters of expertise to soft skills like negotiation.



Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh, Luuk Rieng Group
Thailand

Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh has successfully used skill development to rehabilitate those affected in conflict zones in **Thailand**. Wannakanok runs the **Luuk Rieng Group**, an organization empowering children and mothers impacted by the insurgency in South Thailand. She realized that despite the insurgency being a widely discussed issue, very little attention was given to the ground reality and the problems faced by those communities. Wannakanok believes the right skills can help these children in particular with emotional management and leadership skills to steer away from self-victimization. Her organization has partnered with 74 school councils in the conflict zones. This initiative has impacted close to 40,000 students to date.

Figure 3 also illustrates that “Changing behavior” is the second most important key approach used by both genders, with 14.72% of women and 10.78% men choosing this strategy.



Anthea Ong,
Hush Tea Bar, A Good Space, Work Well Leaders and
Welcome in my Backyard
Singapore

Anthea Ong, from **Singapore** believes that changing the mindset and behaviour of social entrepreneurs is also critical. Anthea has been leading and championing several social causes from environmental conservation to inclusive workplaces for individuals with mental health issues. She is the founder of **Hush TeaBar, A Good Space, WorkWell Leaders and Welcome in my Backyard**. Anthea believes that through the strategy of creating a culture of trust and openness with the target beneficiaries has helped in overcoming barriers they faced. She says by having the right mindset in place, her team is able to co-create solutions and solve mistakes together as one unit. Anthea’s vision of having a cooperative mindset is not just restricted to her team but the whole social entrepreneurship ecosystem. She looks at other social entrepreneurs as co-opetition possibilities and not competition. Anthea says by doing this they can solve larger problems at the systemic level.



Nani Zulminarni, PEKKA
Indonesia

Nani Zulminarni, a veteran social entrepreneur in **Indonesia**, founded **PEKKA** to empower widowed, divorced, and single women. Interestingly the very name PEKKA is both an abbreviation and a word meaning “sensitive.” Nani was inspired to start PEKKA after she faced several challenges after her divorce. She wanted to change the prevalent mindset that women do not have the capacity to lead a family.

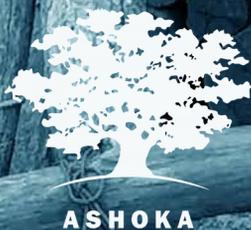
Indonesia’s family governance system is deeply patriarchal in nature. Marriage laws clearly define the husband as the head of the household. As a result, women-headed households often face discrimination in terms of economic access, legislative hurdles, and social stigma. This inspired her to begin skill development and behavior change programs for women in rural areas. She believes that with the right skills, women can become more financially independent, and build their confidence and self-worth. She hopes that with more women contributing financially, their standing in society can also improve.

She ensures that PEKKA’s approach is inclusive and that activities are open to men as well. This is driven by her belief that changing the patriarchal mindset of men is critical for changing the systemic issues facing women. Through her work, Nani has revolutionized the way several women function in their communities. Women who participate in her program proudly identify themselves as PEKKA. Her program now consists of 404 women’s groups organized both in villages and on the provincial level. It has grown from 4 provinces to 20 provinces across 1,500 villages helping more than 50,000 members. The collective power of these women’s groups resulted in a cash fund of over 5 billion rupiahs for savings and loan groups in West Java.



PART THREE

Unique Challenges and Approaches in Women Social Entrepreneurship



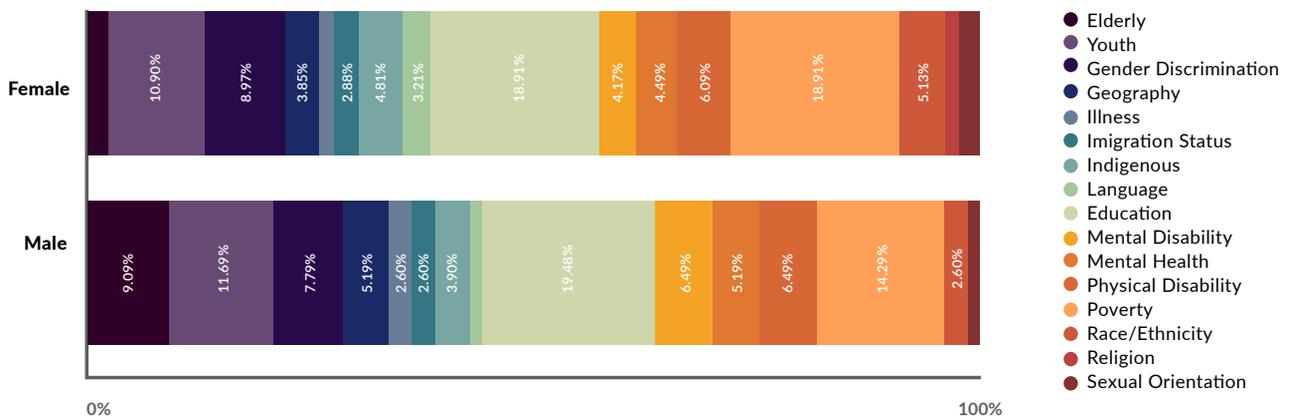
S&P Global Foundation

Introduction

Despite millions of women contributing to the Southeast Asian economies, it is an unequal playing field of economic opportunities between women and men. This imbalance between the obstacles and barriers faced by women and men is also notable within the field of social entrepreneurship. While men and women social entrepreneurs work towards a common good, several aspects of their experiences differ greatly.

A. Women Social Entrepreneurs Tend to Work More Towards Inclusive Communities

Figure 4: Characteristics of Target Demographic by Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs



For both men and women social entrepreneurs, their top two primary focus is on helping those who are less educated and poor, with 18.91% of women and 19.48% of men choosing to help the less educated and 18.91% of women and 14.29% of men working to uplift the poor. However, women tend to work more towards inclusive communities along socio-cultural sensitivities and fault lines, helping those who are under-served due to their sexual orientation, religion, race and ethnicity, or language.





Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-USman,
Teach Peace Build Peace Movement.
Philippines

Bai Rohaniza “Honey” Sumndad-USman from the **Philippines** uses education to imbibe peace-building in future generations across the country. Her organization works with children in conflict and non-conflict areas with the goal of creating a better and more peaceful future generation.

According to the 2017 United Nations Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Philippines, it was stated that “Armed groups are actively recruiting and using children in open battle. The report cites a majority of children being used as human shields. Due to access limitations and security constraints, monitoring, and verification of children in war have been difficult. To date, there has been no confirmed number of active child combatants in the Philippines.”

Having experienced gulf war in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia when she was a child and her experiences in conflict areas where even children carried weapons had a deep impact on her, inspired by her family of freedom fighters and from two different religions, she aimed to transform the lives of children affected by conflict. This led to the formation of the **Teach Peace Build Peace Movement**.

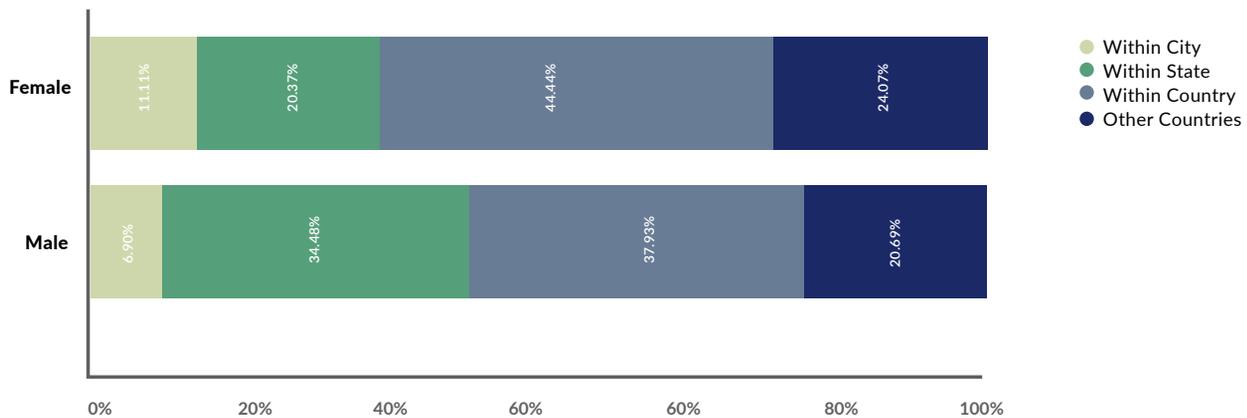
Honey saw the urgent need for incorporating peace building into the education of children. Therefore, with her organization she reaches out to children in their formative years to create “a wide-scale interfaith, intercultural and intergenerational movement” to educate and create a culture of peace and resilience within the future generations. Similar to Ashoka’s Everyone a Changemaker movement, Honey’s mission is to make “Every Filipino a Peacemaker”.

B. Women Social Entrepreneurs Scale and Replicate Their Work Nationally and Internationally

Social entrepreneurs work to solve some of society's biggest problems. Therefore, when an organization or an idea creates social impact, the initiative or idea grows and can be replicated within a city, a region, other parts of the counties, and even internationally.

The data from the surveys indicated in Figure 5 note that almost half of the WSEs (44.44%) have replicated their impact within other parts of the country. In comparison, male social entrepreneurs replicate their work more within their state and region (34.48%) and do not reach the same level of replication nationally (37.93%).

Figure 5: Replication of Work by Geographical Area



Butet Manurung, Sokola Rimba,
Indonesia

Butet Manurung has been described as a pioneer for alternative education for indigenous people in **Indonesia**. She devised the **Sokola Rimba** system with the intent of bridging the communication gap between indigenous people and the rest.

Butet received much critical acclaim for this system, which is now used in several remote areas across Indonesia. **Since 2016, the Government of Indonesia has involved Butet and her team in designing contextual and culturally sensitive curriculum for indigenous people.** As a result of its rather remarkable nature, this program has received international acclaim as well. Butet is also a recipient of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for her breakthrough work.

Several indigenous people of Indonesia have been living for centuries with little contact with the outside world. However, with more and more rainforest land being exploited for development, it is becoming increasingly difficult for these people to stay disconnected. Unfortunately, there are very little opportunities for indigenous people to actively participate and voice their opinion on these developmental programs. This is mainly due to language barriers. Butet has been bridging this gap by developing a unique teaching program for indigenous people. Based on her own experiences of teaching in forests, Butet developed the Sokola Rimba system. This method enables people from pre-literate societies to quickly learn to read and write in their own language before teaching them Indonesian. She hopes that with this program, communication between the indigenous and the others will transform to real conversations. Her vision is to empower these people to be involved in decisions about their land.

What makes the Sokola Rimba System impactful is that it was formulated with inputs from the indigenous people keeping their traditions and culture in mind. Hence, it has the approval and acceptance of the indigenous people, making it easier to implement. Currently, Sokola organizes study trips for indigenous youth providing opportunities to be heard in government forums. Butet's programs have 15,000 beneficiaries across 15 schools in different parts of Indonesia.

As Figure 5 indicates, almost a fourth of WSEs (24.07%) have replicated internationally while only a fifth of the men (20.69%) managed to do the same. One of the reasons behind this may be that several WSEs have been pioneers in their field working towards inclusive communities. As a result, their work is often an inspiration not just for their communities but for other countries as well.



**Kusumadewi (DY) Suharya, Alzheimer Indonesia (ALZI),
Indonesia**

Kusumadewi (DY) Suharya is an example of a WSE whose work has crossed international borders. DY has a vision of developing active dementia and aging friendly cities across **Indonesia**. **Her organization, Alzheimer Indonesia (ALZI) is the first and only organization aiding dementia patients and their caregivers in the country.**

She launched the “Do Not Underestimate Memory Loss” campaign, to promote awareness about early warning signs of dementia. The campaign focused on spreading awareness about the illness and acceptance of patients. DY also ensured that awareness was targeted across generations.

The campaign’s success was visible with a sharp increase for early detection of dementia and cognitive issues in 3 hospitals in 3 cities of Indonesia. Across Indonesia, ALZI has become the go-to source on all things related to dementia. The messaging and focus of her campaigns gave DY leverage to replicate her program nationally.

Her program was scaled nationally when she partnered with The Health Ministry to launch Indonesia’s Dementia National Plan in March 2016. DY’s caregiver support group started in one city and has now grown to 10 cities in Indonesia with 3 ALZI champions. DY’s campaigns have also been appreciated regionally, indicated by the adaptation of the information and education material to 10 languages to be used in 5 countries.



C. Women Social Entrepreneurs Take Decades to Change Policies

Although WSEs have replicated their work more than male social entrepreneurs, our research indicated that close to two-thirds (67.11%) of WSEs are yet to create change in government policies. WSEs successfully create change at the community level by replicating their work within the different communities they work in. However, they struggle to bring about policy changes. The handful of WSEs who have impacted policy change also stressed that it took decades of hard work and lobbying.

Figure 6: Progress in Policy Change by Geographical Area



The reason behind WSEs struggling to impact policy change is multifaceted. Firstly, men often choose to work in broader and already established focus areas that may be more well-resourced by policymakers. In comparison, women tend to work more towards inclusive communities along socio-cultural sensitivities and fault lines, helping those who are under-served due to their sexual orientation, religion, race and ethnicity, or language. As a result, attaining government support is challenging.

Furthermore, with government bodies being predominantly male in ASEAN, many WSEs struggle to have meaningful conversations with government leaders. A common grievance is that most male policymakers do not view women as equals and refuse input.





Poonsap Suanmuag Tulaphan,
Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion or
Homenet Thailand,
Thailand

Poonsap Suanmuag Tulaphan, a WSE from **Thailand**, has been working for close to 40 years to capacitate Thai women, especially informal workers, to be more economically independent and empowered. Poonsap emphasizes that government support is critical for the success of the programs in her organization, **Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion or Homenet Thailand**. However, she explains that one of the biggest challenges in her work has been getting policymakers to create changes within public policies to support these women.

The focus of her organization has been on the informal economy and its workers. The sector, while accounting for 54.7 % of Thailand's total GDP, has severe issues of labor exploitation, low wages, absence of welfare, work-related illness, and labor rights protection. Her strategies are to build the networks of informal workers in Thailand and develop new skills while pushing for regulations and policies which protect the rights and welfare of informal workers in order to help them become truly independent.

Her organization now works with over 4,000 informal workers through different networks from all over Thailand. 80 percent of these workers are women, and some are from the most vulnerable groups, such as Muslim communities and the elderly.

Despite her tremendous success, Poonsap says influencing government policy is still extremely hard for WSEs. She uses Iceland as an example and points out how the country has integrated gender issues into its policies led by its female president. However, most policymakers in Southeast Asia have not yet developed policies to address gender-specific issues.

As Figure 6 indicates, only 32.89% of women have impacted policy change compared to 40% of men who have been successful in enabling policy change.

Maria Fatima Lorenzo and Ines Fernandez, both from the Philippines, are two of the very few WSEs who have successfully impacted government policy change. However, they point out that despite working for decades, it is only in recent years that they have been able to make a significant impact on policy.



Maria Fatima Lorenzo,
Kythe Foundation,
Philippines

Maria Fatima Lorenzo and **Ines Fernandez**, both from the **Philippines**, are two of the very few WSEs who have successfully impacted government policy change and law making. However, they point out that despite working for decades, it is only in recent years that they have been able to make a significant impact on policy.

Ines, the founder of **Arugaan**, works on a mother-led movement to tackle malnutrition, which is a widespread problem in the country. Ines founded her organization to promote proper breastfeeding practices and healthy indigenous food. With a specific goal of helping mothers in rural areas, Ines realized the importance of government support and policies.

Fatima has a similar view about getting policymakers to listen. She says, “They listen to me, but on a scale of 1-10, the acceptance level would be 7 when I want to be a 9.”

Despite being a pioneer in her space, it has taken her years to finally engage with local governments to create policy changes. To bring awareness at a national level, she partners with other patient advocacy groups to form a stronger lobby. Further, she has been investing in evidence-based research to prove the benefits of psychosocial support.

Ines played an integral part in passing the Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act (2009). She stresses that despite the act being passed it in 2009, the work towards passing this law began way back in late 70s. Several of the WSEs whom we have interviewed also pointed out that topics such as breastfeeding are considered as “women issues” and are not considered important enough to have significant policies in place.



Ines Fernandez,
Arugaan,
Philippines

D. Women Social Entrepreneurs Continue to Tackle Traditional Gender Barriers

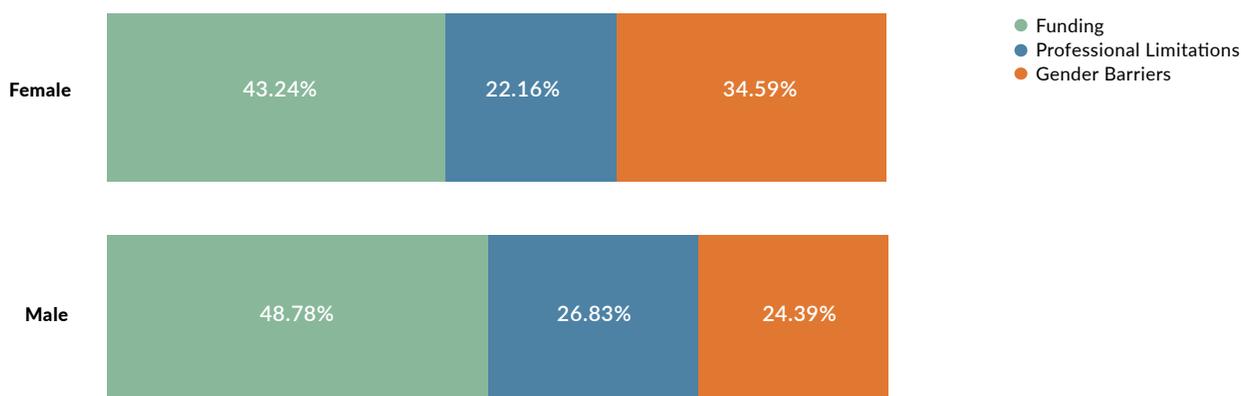
As mentioned earlier, in Southeast Asia communities, cultural traditions continue to dictate gender expectations. This is often tipped against WSEs as these expectations at their core perpetuate that a woman's primary place is her home.

According to a report titled *Unpaid Work in Asia and the Pacific* by the ESCAP, United Nations, **“Women in Asia and the Pacific work the longest hours in the world. On average, women in the region worked 7.7 hours daily, of which only 3.3 hours are paid, and the rest is dedicated to unpaid care work. If included in the measurement of GDP, unpaid care work undertaken by women in the Asia Pacific would add 3.8 trillion USD to the regional total GDP”**.³

The interviews highlighted that the bulk of family responsibilities falls on a woman's shoulder. Women generally have to manage everything from household chores to taking care of children and the elderly. Even when a woman has a formal job beyond the household, these chores are rarely split with the men of the family. This personal workload often results in women sidelining their careers and sometimes even choosing to leave their jobs to take care of their families.

This gender balance, which begins at home, impacts every aspect of a woman's life, including work. **Most of the WSEs interviewed stressed that among the various obstacles in their line of work, gender barriers were the most difficult to break.** The next section shows how deeply gender barriers impede WSEs from reaching their goals.

Figure 7: Key Obstacles Faced by Women and Men Social Entrepreneurs



Gender barriers stem predominantly from society's definition of what a woman should be. **Figure 7 illustrates that 10% more women (34.59%) faced gender barriers compared to men (24.39%).**

This is an important trend and it reflects how difficult it is for WSEs to achieve their goals at par with men. Gender barriers have multiple layers and are probably the most complex of the three obstacles. This is because they are often deep-rooted and therefore the hardest to overcome. One of the primary gender barriers is the limited support ranging from household caregiving duties to emotional support that working women get from their families.

³ESCAP (2019). *Unpaid Work in Asia and the Pacific* by the ESCAP, United Nations. - https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/PP_2019-02_Unpaid%20Work.pdf



Pianporn Deetes, International Rivers, Thailand

Pianporn “Pai” Deetes, a WSE from **Thailand** with close to two decades of service, shares her own personal experience. Pai works on both cross-border environmental and human rights issues in Thailand through her organization **International Rivers**. She is considered a pioneer in her work with Thai and Burmese ethnic grassroots organizations.

Pai’s vision is to build the capacities of river communities such as the Salween River to be their own advocates of river protection. The livelihood of these communities is dependent on the river and they are often not included in development conversations. Pai’s organization International Rivers is working towards long-term policy change that will include community participation.

Like several other WSEs, she has seen that one of the biggest challenges faced by WSEs is the expectations of society and family. Women are expected to put her home first above their own goals. *Pai points out that she has to wake up by 3:00 AM to juggle home and work commitments.* However, Pai also adds that her strong family support helps her reach her professional goals.

Pianporn believes women have a powerful role to play in the space of social entrepreneurship. She believes that women tend to look at problems with empathy and emotion, which she has seen can be helpful during difficult conversations and also in fostering a sense of community. However, she points out that handling multiple roles at home and work can become overwhelming, and in the long run, that this can hold back many WSEs from reaching their vision.



As Figure 7 illustrates, 22.16% of women and 26.83 % of men felt that professional barriers are also a critical issue. The women who manage to break general societal expectations and build a career continue to face challenges in their professional roles. These challenges range from discrimination in not receiving equal opportunities for senior positions to serious issues like harassment. Several of the WSEs interviewed highlighted that they do not have the same skillset or access to networks as their male counterparts, and this limits them in the professional social entrepreneurship ecosystem in several ways. This impacts them in receiving grants, creating partnerships, scaling their programs and influencing policy.



Supinya Klangnarong, Campaign for Popular Media Reform, Thailand

Supinya Klangnarong has been working for over 20 years towards democratizing the media in **Thailand**. She founded the **Campaign for Popular Media Reform** with a few other media professionals as a resource center to support new media and legal reform. She describes her work as media reformation where she leads the fight towards media freedom and decentralization.

Thailand's radio and television waves were completely owned by the government for a long time. Civil rights movements felt that this was undemocratic and that the media should be decentralized to remain secular. Supinya was part of the citizen rights groups that pushed for Article 40 to become a law to bring this change. Article 40 mandates that radio and television frequencies are national resources and should be used for the public interest. This law would change the ultimate authority the government had on the media.

In 1997, when Article 40 became a law in Thailand, Supinya saw an opportunity to set up her own organization to ensure the law met its full potential. When there were hardly any citizen groups for public media, Supinya decided to form the Campaign for Popular Media Reform to fill this gap.

One of the reasons that drove her to set up her own organization was her personal experiences with other media bodies. Supinya was previously with the NBTC (National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission). When she was part of the committee at NBTC, she was the sole woman there. She mentioned this skewed gender ratio affected several decisions around content. As a woman, she was more open to broadcasting content on taboo topics such as premarital pregnancy, while the men opposed it. Similarly, she points out that she was more sensitive about publishing content about abused women or children, while the men did not share her view.

Supinya's vision for her organization is to become the central resource for public broadcasters who wish to produce high-quality programs. She hopes that her organization can enable the production of programs that are useful and pertinent for Thai audiences. She says her goal of creating safe participatory media is finally becoming a reality, but she had many struggles with regulators and decision-makers.

Supinya strongly believes that women need to stick together. She points out that men have their own circles and network outside work as well. She believes that these groups strengthen their bond, and they support each other at work. Supinya feels women need to come up with something similar so they can empower and inspire each other. She adds that the only way to shift patriarchal stigmas is for women to work together.

Garnering resources to tackle complex social issues in an increasingly uncertain world is a major challenge for both genders of social entrepreneurs. This is evident as illustrated in Figure 7, as both men (48.78%) and women (43.24%) cite this as the biggest obstacle they face.

However, while this is a challenge for both genders, a few factors put WSEs at a greater disadvantage. Firstly, WSEs may find it harder to get funding in the areas they work in and marginalized communities they serve. Secondly, compared to their male counterparts, WSEs may be less confident in business skills such as negotiation or business knowledge such as awareness about monetary regulations. Thirdly, there are cultural traditions in certain parts of Southeast Asia where women are unable to own assets such as land or houses. This makes access to credit even harder or more expensive without collaterals.



Rossana Dewi, Yayasan Gita Pertiwi, Indonesia

Rossana Dewi helps rural women in **Indonesia** become capable decision-makers by educating them in the right skills. She points out access to sustainable funding has been the biggest challenge for her organization **Yayasan Gita Pertiwi**.

Rossana teaches rural women technical and cognitive skills. She personally feels this focus on cognitive skills is important for women to become self-sufficient. Her inspiration to teach women came from her childhood dream of being a teacher.



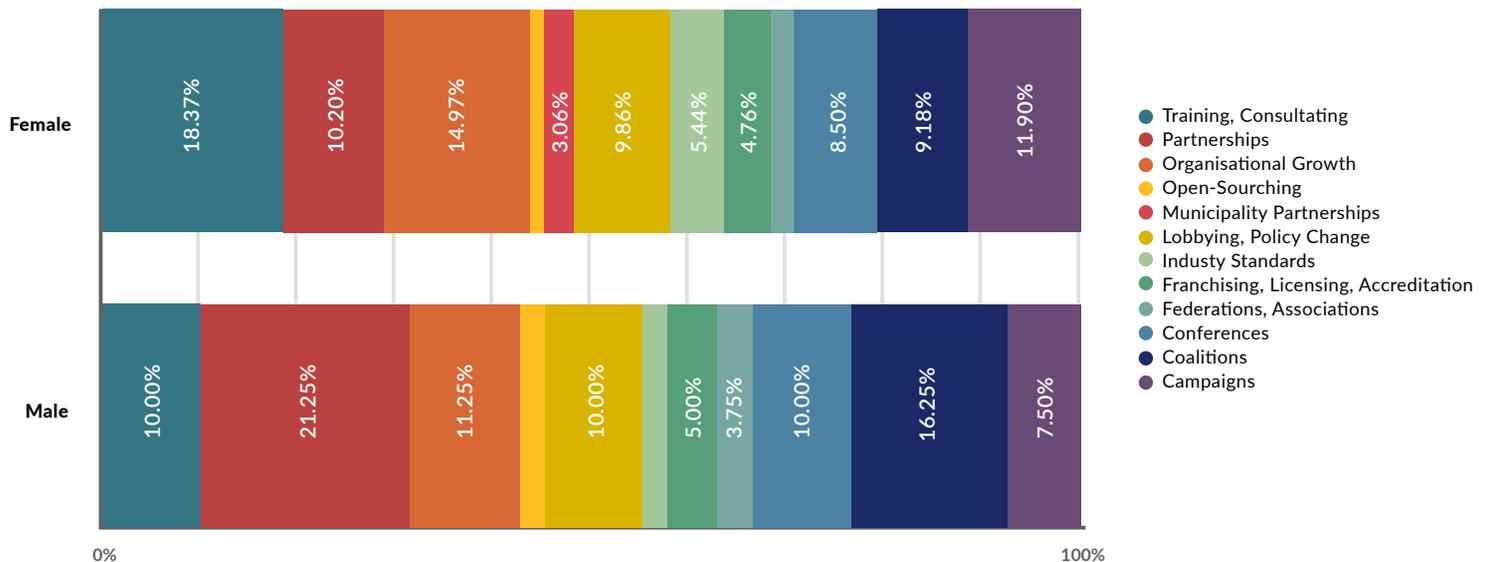
When asked about the challenges she faced, she says funding is a critical issue. She highlights that funding is a complex issue and has many implications for WSEs. She cites an example of how limited funding has restricted her organization in finding more human resources, thereby slowing the growth of the program to some extent. To work around funding issues, Rossana has used some innovative cost-saving tactics. She gives an example of how, when she is short of funds for training, she invites participants to pay for their food or transport, thereby minimizing expenses. To find a long term solution for her funding issues, she also created a new business model where she offers consultations to the companies and the government.



E. Men and Women Social Entrepreneurs Approach Scaling Very Differently

Much like entrepreneurs in other sectors, social entrepreneurs place a great deal of importance on scaling their work. Social entrepreneurs in particular possess a vested interest in scaling, as scaling can bring deeper impact and visibility in other communities that may be facing the same issues. This increased visibility can bring better resources and impact policies in the future as well.

Figure 8: Key Scaling Strategies Adopted by Social Entrepreneurs



As illustrated in Figure 8, men and women approach scaling differently. **Most women (18.37%) chose training as their primary approach to scaling while most men (21.25%) chose partnerships.** This is again reflective of women wanting to build a Changemaker society by empowering each other with the right skills. **The second most common approach used by women (14.97%) was organizational growth, while 16.25% of men chose coalitions as the second most used approach.**



Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh,
Thailand

Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh from **Thailand** is another WSE who has achieved scaling success. She went from working with 20,000 children in a year to 100,000. However, she stressed that this didn't come easy. Like the majority of the WSEs in Figure 8, she uses training as a tool for scaling her program. Wannakanok realized early on the power of sustainability in ensuring her program could scale to new heights. She focuses on building her own human resources instead of depending on external options. To achieve this, she realised training was the best way forward.

She coaches the alumni of her program to become trainers. As of 2014, the healing camp had more than 2,000 past participants, many of whom have become trainers to the next generation. Interestingly, this approach of making everyone an ambassador of her program is similar to Ashoka's Everyone a Changemaker.

PART FOUR

Reflections for the Future



S&P Global Foundation

The next section will discuss how further development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Southeast Asia can contribute to further the impressive work of social entrepreneurs and specifically women social entrepreneurs. The insights focus on the specific support systems and factors that will serve as enablers for WSEs to thrive.

A. ENABLERS FOR BOTH MEN & WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

An ecosystem of partners, stakeholders, funders, and supporters can help both men and women social entrepreneurs with:

- 01 / Funding
- 02 / Partnerships
- 03 / Succession Planning
- 04 / Personal Self-Care
- 05 / Strategic Thinking



1. Funding

Access to funding at the right time and finding sustainable sources has been a challenge for social entrepreneurs (SEs). Some SEs highlight that even when funding is available, sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way of actually being able to access it. Creating a funding pool that is accessible, sustainable, and timely is critical.

How can funding help social entrepreneurs

Sustainability of programs

Social entrepreneurship can be slow as it involves breaking deep-rooted issues while overcoming multiple challenges. This can be laborious in the early stages, especially for entrepreneurs who haven't yet created an impact. Funding is also important to keep the team motivated and organizations running. Further sufficient funding allows exploring avenues for program continuity and improvement.

Reduce dependency on personal assets

Without easy access to funding, several social entrepreneurs have to resort to mortgaging personal assets for loans. In some communities, WSEs cannot receive loans since traditional laws do not allow them to own assets in their names. This leaves very few credit options for some WSEs. A clear funding source can relieve social entrepreneurs from using personal resources and avoid putting a strain on their families.

Invest in the right resources

SEs often struggle to invest in resources that can improve organizational efficiency. This is predominantly due to a lack of funds. This includes skilled human resources, software, and overhead costs. Hiring skilled human resources can broaden and elevate the expertise of the team. Apart from being able to solve problems optimally, it also improves the credibility of the organization.

Suggested Next Steps

- Build relationships with social organizations that globally showcase the work of social entrepreneurs
- Reach out to corporates and angel investors with similar visions
- Creation of a platform to encourage conversations between social entrepreneurs and investors



2. Partnerships

Partnerships can act as a boost for social entrepreneurs and help fill gaps where they are lacking in resources. Partnerships typically include coalitions with government bodies, social organizations, private companies, and even other social entrepreneurial organizations.

How partnerships can help social entrepreneurs

Leverage each other's expertise

Partnerships can help both parties involved as it allows them to leverage each other's resources. Social entrepreneurs can get funding, technical resources, training and expert insights from relevant partnerships. In return, the partners get to work on social missions that are in line with their beliefs and visions.

Lobby together for collective change

This is particularly helpful for social entrepreneurs who are working towards policy change or transforming community behavior. Lobbying together with a partner can make social entrepreneurs strong advocates for collective change.

Wider Impact

When social entrepreneurs form partnerships, they gain access to new networks and communities the partner may already be working in. This offers social entrepreneurs a broader scope and opportunity to widen the impact of their work.

Cost-cutting by sharing resources

By sharing resources, both social entrepreneurs and the partners can avoid large investments in resources and cut costs. Social entrepreneurs can also work on barter deals that can benefit both parties.

Suggested Next Steps

- Social entrepreneurs should identify different categories of partnerships they might want to build. This will be based on what they intend to gain from that partnership - funding, networking, technical resources, human resources, legal advice, or business advice.
- Social entrepreneurs can come together to run campaigns highlighting why partnering with them is an investment in the community.

3. Succession Planning

Succession planning is important to social entrepreneurs because they want to ensure the impact of their work is not disrupted and continues, even if they leave the organization. As mentioned previously, it takes years for social entrepreneurs to create impact and their natural inclination would be to carry forward this investment.

How succession planning can help social entrepreneurs

Ensuring long term impact

With a strong succession plan, SE can ensure continuity of their work in the event they leave the organization. It also allows strong experienced talent to grow and continue the work to sustain long-term impact and growth.

Create an Everyone's a Changemaker environment

Bringing together a team and creating a succession plan allows for others to become Changemakers. This also gives the team empowerment to create change on their own.

Involving the community

Engaging the community to take charge of the work that is impacting them ensures that there is a succession plan to the organization. This also boosts the confidence of the community by assuring them long-term benefits from the organization's work.

Suggested Next Steps

- Host workshops for young adults to encourage social entrepreneurship with the next generation.
- Invite part-time volunteers from the community to experience social entrepreneurship first hand.
- Train founders and social entrepreneurs on strategic and intentional succession planning



4. Personal Self-Care

Several social entrepreneurs mentioned focusing on personal self-care as a key learning. This includes avoiding burnout at work and maintaining a good work-life balance. Social entrepreneurs usually choose subjects that are close to their personal beliefs and are personally invested in their work. However, several SEs have also faced extreme stress as part of their jobs. This can result in burnout and create undue stress on their personal relationships as well.

How personal self-care can help social entrepreneurs

Continuity of work

Maintaining work-life balance ensures better physical and mental health. In addition, it improves efficiency and helps avoid fatigue, boredom, or losing interest in work. All these contribute to the continuity and sustained impact of their work.

Staying motivated

Social entrepreneurship can be a long and uphill journey. It can take years before a social entrepreneur (SE) sees any tangible change. This can lead to demotivation and the desire to quit. Ensuring good personal self-care practices can keep the SE motivated during difficult phases.

Suggested Next Steps

- Encourage counselling sessions amongst SEs to keep their mental wellbeing in check
- Host stress management workshops that can help SEs in difficult situations
- Social entrepreneurs need to come together as a fraternity to offer socio-emotional support to each other





5. Strategic Thinking

Since social entrepreneurs are focused on long term impact, they tend to invest time in planning for the future. This involves strategic thinking and visioning to formulate a solid and dependable plan. Strategic thinking ensures they anticipate possible roadblocks and identify resources to invest in. As a result, they can work optimally towards greater impact.

How strategic planning can help social entrepreneurs

Structured goals

Having a clear roadmap with tangible goals can not only improve the efficiency of the team, but also keeps them motivated. This also ensures the team is better prepared for possible crisis management.

Build credibility

When the organization has a plan backed by strategy, it can build confidence in the minds of investors, partners and the community as a whole.

Learning and growth

Using strategic thinking allows SEs to look at their plans objectively and identify gaps and strengths. This will help in finetuning their work further.

Suggested Next Steps

- Corporate and social organizations can invest in SEs by hosting workshops on strategic planning and problem solving with their in-house talents and expertise.
- Corporates can offer pro bono consulting and guide SEs with strategic planning across a few key dimensions of the business.

B. GENDER-SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

This section will take a look at gender-specific support that can be offered to WSEs. These factors were derived from the insights and experiences shared by the various WSEs who contributed to this report. While the WSEs spoke about a wide range of issues, most of them are interlinked. With the patterns that emerged from these conversations, the following are the most commonly requested support functions:

1

A Stronger Network for Support

2

Structured Mentoring Program

3

Increase Engagement of Stakeholders

4

Female Advocates Within Governments

5

Address Gender-Based Skill Differential

1. A Stronger Network for Support

Several of the WSEs who participated in this report pointed out the lack of strong female networks that male entrepreneurs have. Men tend to start building networks right from university. Some patriarchal families do not allow women to pursue higher education. As a result, not all women get an opportunity to build a network this early on. Further, some WSEs highlighted that the culture of men forming their own groups at work leaves women out.

Men tend to forge strong bonds by participating together in activities outside of work as well. Cultural expectations prevent women from being accepted in such sessions. It is also noteworthy some women do participate in these networks. However, they point out that these predominantly male networks did not understand women-specific issues and as a result, were able to offer little support.

How a Stronger Network for Support can help WSEs

- **A platform for peer-to-peer learning:** WSEs can share experiences, learnings and future plans. They can act as sounding boards for each other's future ideas.
- **A space to forge partnerships:** Several WSEs work in related and similar spaces, thereby creating scope to leverage each other's work. Women who work towards the same goal can also form common lobbying fronts to push for policy changes.
- **Emotional Support:** Networks can serve as a safe space for women to share issues and seek emotional support. While many WSEs do have strong personal support, being able to have conversations with other women in the same space can be a morale booster or serve as inspirational role models.

Women Social Entrepreneurs' Wish List:

Cristina Liamzon,
**Overseas Filipinos' Leadership, Innovation,
Financial Literacy and Social Entrepreneurship
(OF-LIFE) ALSE Program**
Philippines

“We do not have a chance to network with other ASEAN WSEs. We do not have an opportunity to come together with other women and discuss growth in the region. A network will give us exposure to the work of other women. While we do have the option of reading up about other WSEs, personal interaction will be more powerful. It allows us to get exposed to innovation and trailblazing initiatives which could potentially help in replicating and scaling our organizations.”



Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh,
Luuk Rieng Group (LSE)
Thailand

“WSEs need a stage to present their work and discuss new innovations and models being used in the market.”



Dinny Jusuf,
Toraja Melo
Indonesia

“Building a community for WSEs to connect and collaborate with one another is critical. We need a network to help each other out.”





Rohaniza “Honey” Sumndad-USman,
Teach Peace Build Peace Movement
Philippines

“ We need a community of practice that will serve as a strong support system, regularly checking up on each other. If anybody has concerns, we bring it up and learn from each other. We can then learn together, share our networks. This will ensure we do not feel like we’re alone and draw confidence and strength from each other ”

Supinya Klangnarong,
Campaign for Popular
Media Reform
Thailand

“ We need a space where women can come together, share and learn from each other. It doesn’t have to be formal but a place where women feel safe and can share things that they are not able to share anywhere else. ”



Cynthia Ong, Forever Sabah
Malaysia

“ Being a social entrepreneur can be a lonely road and it is hard to get support. Building a community for WSEs can help build their capacity in ASEAN. ”



Suggested Next Steps

- Creation of regional WSEs networks that host regular events
- WSEs can also host their own networking sessions by invite their colleagues and encouraging them to bring other WSEs

2. Structured Mentoring Program

While networks can help with peer-to-peer learning, WSEs also voiced the need for mentorship. Mentors can offer guidance and advice on how to grow and navigate challenges. Several WSEs reflected on how there was a lack of mentors when they started out. Now, with experience on their side, these WSEs are keen on sharing their knowledge with the next generation. They see this as an investment in the future of WSEs. Hence, several willing WSEs can be brought together to form a structured mentorship program for young WSEs.

How Structured Mentoring Programs can help WSEs

- **Experience based guidance:** Several WSEs have done breakthrough work and were pioneers in their field. Their immense experience can bring valuable guidance for younger WSEs tackling the same issues.
- **Skill development and training:** Mentors can bridge the skill development gap that many WSEs face. They can offer inputs on what skills mentees should invest in learning. Moreover, allowing mentees to shadow the work of mentors offers them a fantastic on-the-ground learning experience.
- **Motivation for young WSEs:** Successful WSEs who have broken barriers to bring real change in their communities can be inspirational for young women. Conversations about their personal journeys can help keep mentees motivated to reach goals.
- **Build the “Next Generation of Changemakers”:** Mentorship can be a powerful tactic to groom the next generation of Changemakers and female leaders. Several WSEs may have shared the same problems, and sharing personal experiences can be a wonderful learning experience.

Women Social Entrepreneurs' Wish List:



Butet Manurung,
Sokolo Rimba
Indonesia

There is a need to teach skills such as critical thinking and capability evaluation. This can also be effectively done by mentorship, where the mentee can shadow the mentor.



**Amina Evangelista, Roots of Health
Philippines**

“I don't have a formal mentor figure, but there have been several individuals who guided my thinking and how we do things. This has been one of my requests when I became an Ashoka fellow.”



**Kritaya Sreesungpakit,
Why I Why (YIY) Foundation
Thailand**

“Mentorship can help leadership training. A programme with women who are young leaders and those who are already successful will be a learning experience. These mentors can share stories about how they break barriers.”



Suggested Next Steps

- Set regional mentor programs using a pool of senior WSEs. This can be structured to allow young WSEs to apply to be mentees
- Larger social organizations and experienced WSEs can allow younger WSEs to shadow their work and learn on the ground



3. Increase Engagement of Stakeholders

Working in silos can impede the depth and breadth of work done by WSEs. Involving relevant stakeholders can be useful in sustaining programs and overcoming challenges. Stakeholders in this context include local community leaders, governments, religious leaders, and other sectors. This engagement can create an ecosystem of Changemakers that will drive the community forward.

How Increased Engagement of Stakeholders can help WSEs

- **Sustainability:** Involvement of stakeholders can help in succession planning and ensuring long term sustainability of programs. Having the community involved can provide support to WSEs during challenging times such as fund shortage.
- **Better Access to Resources:** Keeping the community engaged opens up more avenues for supporting resources such as funds and skilled personnel. It can also enable easy access to common resources such as community centres.
- **Potential to Drive Policy Change:** Engaging governments and community leaders can increase their awareness about social issues. This will help them better understand why change is needed and this in turn can help push for policy change.
- **Changing Mindsets:** Breaking deep-seated mindsets has been a huge challenge for WSEs. Keeping stakeholders engaged offers an avenue for conversations and exchange of ideas. This can help society see that WSEs are working for them rather than against them.



Women Social Entrepreneurs' Wish List:

**Rohaniza “Honey” Sumndad-Usman,
Teach Peace Build Peace Movement
Philippines**

Sustainability is always important when we implement programmes on the ground. When we talk about strong impact, we should aim for a multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional approach (government, local government units, education sector, community leaders). Others call it “sandwich approach,” but I call it “coming together approach”



**Luh “Sari” Putu Upadisari,
Rama Sesana Foundation,
Indonesia**

My goal is to disseminate information as widely as possible. This is dependent on the collective action of the community. Involving stakeholders such as the government, the civil society and the private sector is of paramount importance.



Suggested Next Steps

- WSEs can host events and invite not just stakeholders, but members of the community as well. They can use these events to showcase their work and encourage the engagement of the community.
- Create and support multi-stakeholder engagement platforms in the region



4. Female Advocates Within Governments

Almost all WSEs from this report spoke about the challenge of dealing with gender-biased policies. In addition, they also struggled to have conversations with male policymakers who did not see their issues as important enough to be changed. Over the last few years, there has been a slow but steady increase in women government officials across Southeast Asia. This can be leveraged for the benefit of WSEs. Getting these women on board as advocates for women issues can amplify the requests of WSEs.

How Female Advocates within Governments can help WSEs

- **Enable easier conversations:** WSEs struggle to have conversations with male officials. They say they are not respected, and men don't understand the gravity of the issues faced by these women. A female official can view these issues from the WSE's perspective and make communication easier. This can help WSEs better highlight the support they need from the government.
- **Push for Policy Change:** Female policymakers can help push for abolition or modification of gender-based policies. For example, several parts of Asia still deny women the right to loans if they lack assets under their name.
- **Establish budgets for women's issues:** Female government officials can urge their committees to dedicate funds specifically for women's issues and women's equality. Most male policymakers do not have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by women and therefore do not see the need for budget allocation.
- **Inspire future WSEs:** Engaging female officials can inspire not just WSEs, but young women as well. Women in power bringing positive change to countries can motivate other women to see that change is possible.
- **Spread awareness about important policies and rights:** Many WSEs point out that the women they work with are unaware of their basic rights and policies in place to protect them. Some WSEs highlighted that even they are unaware at times, and this impacts their work. Female policy workers can help with campaigns to keep women updated about their rights.

Women Social Entrepreneurs' Wish List:

Poonsap Suanmuag, Homenet Thailand
Thailand

“Sometimes people just think of men’s and women’s rights superficially. They don’t dig deep. Let’s take the social welfare issue. We have to find a way to let the women develop themselves. However male policymakers do not take into consideration things such as limited child care options being a challenge.”



Amina Evangelista, Roots of Health,
Philippines

“It is difficult to have male allies within the government. The majority of the leaders are men but it is hard to have conversations with them. When I speak about women’s issues, I am often asked what I am doing for men.”



Suggested Next Steps

- Creation of an association that brings WSEs and female government officials and policy makers onto one platform
- WSEs can make a collective representation to female officials about changing biased policies



5. Address Gender-Based Skill Differential

WSEs feel the impact of not having the same access to education and skills as their male peers. This gender imbalance often begins at childhood, and women sometimes lag behind in years of education. A critical step towards this will be for partners to transform their mindsets and invest in women-centric support systems.

How Addressing Gender-Based Skill Differential can help WSEs

- **Helps tackle specific gender barriers:** Training WSEs in skills as critical thinking and problem-solving can help them overcome gender-specific barriers such as cultural restrictions.
- **Can help make up for the lack of resources:** Multiple WSEs have highlighted that they do not equal access to resources and networks like men do. Powered by the right skills such as innovative thinking, WSEs can better navigate around this resource gap.
- **Boost their morale:** WSEs often have to question cultural beliefs and traditions. This often results in communities questioning the authority of WSEs on such matters. In such cases, several WSEs said having a certification would have helped them influence communities. Moreover, some WSEs say being armed with critical influencing and persuasion skills can boost their morale and motivate them to tackle challenges.
- **Inspire the next generation:** Addressing gender barriers through training needs to start young at the primary education level. It is usually when gender bias is rooted in young minds that ultimately become unconscious bias in adulthood. Teaching young children the importance of gender equality builds the foundation for a better and more equitable society tomorrow.

Women Social Entrepreneurs' Wish List:



Nani Zulminarni, PEKKA
Indonesia

“Women social entrepreneurs should learn critical thinking and problem-solving. These are needed to read situations accurately.”

Ratna Refida,
Yayasan Tunas Alam Indonesia
Indonesia

“It is important for women to have a safe space to exchange ideas. What is also critical is creating avenues for women to learn new skills”



Suggested Next Steps

- Formulate skill training for WSEs based on the unique challenges they face
- Corporates can offer internships opportunities to young WSEs to hone their business skills

Conclusion

Ashoka and the S&P Global Foundation spearheaded this regional study on Advancing Women Social Entrepreneurs in ASEAN to better understand the landscape of women social entrepreneurship in the region through quantitative and qualitative data.

By analyzing the challenges and barriers faced by women social entrepreneurs and listening deeply to their hopes and aspirations, we were able to gain insights into potential solutions and enablers that can help to unlock their potential for greater socio-economic impact and value that they bring to communities that they serve. By building a more inclusive eco-system, we can also inspire and encourage more to join the ranks of women social entrepreneurs.

We invite stakeholders and supporters to consider the ideas and bold recommendations, and join us on a collective movement to empower women social entrepreneurs in the region.

Together, we can all be Changemakers to build a better world.



S&P Global Foundation

Acknowledgments

About WISE Initiative

This report is a part of Ashoka's contribution to the Women's Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship (WISE). Through a series of storytelling initiatives, Ashoka has been supporting WISE in celebrating WSEs globally. The report was designed keeping in mind WISE's vision of leveraging the collective power of WSEs.

The Women's Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship (WISE) is a global framework based in the global South to elevate the number, knowledge, and power of women in social entrepreneurship by redefining success from a gendered lens and celebrating the ways in which women successfully lead and make impact.

A core aim of WISE is to shift the innovation ecosystem toward recognizing and supporting the power of scaling deep impact - a model for change often led by women entrepreneurs where mindsets, patterns of behavior, and cultural norms are affected. WISE aims to bring women leading scaling deep work to the fore, creating opportunities for these innovators to source ideas from one another and harness their collective expertise to advance women in social entrepreneurship.

Note from Dr. Iman Bibars

As the founder of the Women's Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship (WISE), I am excited to introduce this study into advancing women social entrepreneurship in ASEAN. As this report will show, and as WISE has continuously found to be true globally, women social entrepreneurs are an incredible force for good, and continuously prove their bravery and determination in tackling some of the most deep-rooted problems our societies face.

Despite the deep impact women leaders consistently enact, they are incredibly underrepresented and under-acknowledged across all sectors worldwide. Such disparities are evident in Parliaments across the globe (where only 24 percent of members are women globally), on male-dominated corporate boards, and in the amount of funding, support, access to resources, and recognition women innovators and leaders receive.

Yet, women show consistently that we can and do overcome these challenges and succeed in changing the world. As this report shows, time and time again, women innovators are tackling the root causes of issues, bravely facing problems often ignored by the mainstream, and creating long-lasting, truly transformative change.

In this way, women are truly an inspirational force. We continuously exhibit resiliency, determination, and ingenuity and often lead initiatives that not only scale to other countries and accrue large revenues, but also scale deep - impacting mindsets, social norms, and patterns of behavior. Ashoka's diverse women Fellows in the ASEAN region are further evidence of the incredible impact changemaking women can lead, and recognizing, supporting, and scaling their work and the models for impact of women leaders is more urgent than ever to building a better and more prosperous world.

Special Thanks to Women Social Entrepreneurs Interviewed

Indonesia

Nani Zulminarni	Program for Women Headed Households in Indonesia (PEKKA)
Rossana Dewi	Yayasan Gita Pertiwi
Septi Peni Wulandani	Ibu Professional
Farha Ciciek	Tanoker
Kusuma DY Yayasan	Alzheimer Indonesia
Ratna Refida	Yayasan Kerja Pemukiman Rakyat (YKPR)
Ellena Rachmawati	Yayasan Masyarakat Peduli
Sri Wahyaningsih	Sanggar Anak Alam
Masnu'ah	Puspita Bahari
Butet Manurung	Sokola Rimba
Dinny Jusuf	Toraja Melo
Ewa Wojkowska	Kopernik
Luh Putu Upadisari	Rama Sesana Foundation
Tri Mumpuni	IBEKA

Malaysia

Cynthia Ong	Forever Sabah
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Philippines

Maria Fatima Lorenzo	Kythe Foundation, Inc.
Ma. Ines Fernandez	Arugaan
Cristina Liamzon	Overseas Filipinos' Leadership, Innovation, Financial Literacy and Social Entrepreneurship (OF-LIFE) ALSE Program
Amina Evangelista Swanepoel	Roots of Health
Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-Usman	Teach Peace Build Peace Movement

Singapore

Anthea Ong	Hush Tea Bar, A Good Space, Work Well Leaders, Welcome In My Backyard
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Thailand

Wannakanok Pohitaedaoh	Luuk Rieng Group
Nattaya Boonpakdee	Healthy Cgukd, Youth, and Family Promotion Section, Thai Health Foundation
Khemporn Wirunrapun	Foundation for Child Development
Kritaya Sreesungpakit	Why I Why (YIY) Foundation
Supinya Klangnarong	Campaign for Popular Media Reform (CPMR)
Siriwan Wongkiatpaisarn	SR Law
Suchada Chakpisut	Thai Civil Rights and Investigative Journalism (TCIJ)
Somboon Srikamdokcare	The Council of Work and Environment Related Patients Network
Pianporn "Pai" Deetes	International Rivers
Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan	Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion

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Cambodia

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Indonesia

Yosssy Suparyo - Perkumpulan Gedhe Nusantara; Rahmiana Rahman - Yayasan Rumah Relawan Remaja; Yani sagaroa - Yayasan lembaga olah hidup; Lendo Novo - Sekolah Alam; Agung Alit - Mitra Bali Fair Trade; Nani Zulminarni - Yayasan Pemberdayaan PEKKA; Hambali - Mitra Aksi Foundation; Prof Dr dr Luh Ketut Suryani - SpKJ(K)Suryani Institute for Mental Health; Dinny Jusuf - TORAJAMELO; Evandri G Pantouw - Indexalaw; Widjanarka E Saksana - Personal; Rossana Dewi R - Gita Pertiwi; Fransiska Oetami - Clevio Camp; Adinindyah Arya Wisnutama - LAWE Indonesia; Iwan Rudi Saktiawan - BPRS Botani; Harry Surjadi - TempoWitness; Regi Wahyu - Hara; Aryo Moedanton - Anak Muda Nusantara / Anakmuda.net; Tanjung Niasari - Yayasan Pendidikan Masa Keemasan; Maria Loretha- Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum Untuk Kedaulatan Pangan NTT; Muslikhin Kusma - Pusat Kajian Pengembangan Ekonomi Kerakyatan - PKPEK; Sri Wahyaningsih - Sanggar Anak Alam; Lian Gogali - Mosintuwu Institute; Septi Peni Wulandani - Ibu Profesional; Masnuah - Komunitas Perempuan Nelayan; Saur Marlina Manurung - Sokola Institute; Ratna Refida - Santiri Foundation; Nadya Saib - Wangsa Jelita; Annisa Hasanah - Ecofun Indonesia; Dina Lumbantobing - PESADA, JASS SEA dan Konsorsium Permampu; Mohamad Zaini Alif - Komunitas Hong; Luh Putu Upadisar - Yayasan Rama Sesana; Ellena Rahmawati - alias; Susana Helena - Yayasan Masyarakat Peduli; Michael Chian - BeED; DY Suharya - Alzheimer Indonesia; Muhammad Farras - DamoGO, Inc

Malaysia

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Thailand

Suchada Chakpisut - Thai Civil Rights and Investigative Journalism (TCIJ); Somboon Srikandokcare - The Council of work and environment related patient network of Thailand; Wannakanok Pohitaed-aoh - Luuk Rieng Manop Pratoomthong - Thai traditional medicine foundation and southern folk; Pattaporn Yerburch - Sal Forest Co., Ltd; Tuenjai Deetes - Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF) Thailand; Siriwan Wongkiatpaisarn - Sr Law; Nawee Nakwatchara - Grassroot Innovation Network; Bupatip Chamni - Rak Khao Chamao Group; Kritiya Sreesunpagit - Transformation Game Thailand; Nawee Nakwatchara - Grassroot Innovation Network; Phi Van Nguyen - Arkki ASEAN; Magali du Parc Crosta - Baan Dek Foundation; Nattinee Sae-ho - Thrive Venture Builder; Salinee Hurley - Sun Sawang Co., Ltd; Pensiri Sornbut - Local Alike

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