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Headline: Singapore ahead of other South-east Asian countries in non-profit sector, report shows

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Singapore's well-developed non-profit sector is ahead of other countries in South-east Asia, and charitable donations by both individuals and institutions here have risen steadily over the past decade, according to a new report on strategic philanthropy released on Monday.

Among the reasons cited are tax policies that allow individual donors to deduct 2.5 times the value of their donations to Institutions of Public Character in their tax filings, said Ms Prapti Uphaday Anand, author of the report released by the Lien Centre for Social Innovation at Singapore Management University (SMU).

The SMU report examines strategic philanthropy in four countries - Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand - to see if rising wealth in these countries has translated into rising philanthropy.

Strategic philanthropy, in contrast to ad hoc charitable donations, is giving to achieve specific long-term objectives. For instance, the Tsao and Lien Foundations here conduct policy research as well as programmes on issues from ageing to sanitation to complement their charity efforts.

But gaps remain in the local philanthropic scene, said Ms Anand, a consultant with the Lien Centre. For instance, there is little publicly available data on the two foundations and non-profit organisations, and on the issues they champion. In contrast, charities in the United States must submit public reports on their income and giving, for example. And there is little public awareness of philanthropy as a field or the career options that it offers.

Ms Anand said: "As countries across South-east Asia grapple with rising inequality and social disparities despite the remarkable economic growth of recent years, this report serves as a useful reference for policymakers in examining how existing policies aid or hinder the development of strategic philanthropy in their respective countries."