

Non-profit sector doing well but 'gaps remain'

By **GRACE CHUA**

SINGAPORE'S well-developed non-profit sector is ahead of those in other South-east Asian countries, 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 yesterday evening.

Among the reasons cited are tax policies that allow individual donors to deduct 2.5 times the value of their donations to Institutions of a Public Character in their tax filings, said Ms Prapti

Uphadyay Anand, author of the report released by the Lien Centre for Social Innovation at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

And organisations such as the National Council of Social Service and National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre support non-profit groups here.

The SMU report examines strategic philanthropy in four countries picked for their speedy growth – 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 ranging 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 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.

There could be more strategic philanthropy to address the root cause, as well as the impact, of emerging social challenges such as rising inequality, said the report's editor, Ms Crystal Hayling.

"Philanthropy is an area where you can be thoughtful as well as being caring," she said.

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