

Third Social Enterprise Advocacy and Leveraging (SEAL) Asia Conference

“Social Entrepreneurship and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration:

**Ensuring the Recovery of Social Enterprises towards Leaving No One Behind
in Building Back Better and Achieving Sustainable Development”**

a Virtual Conference via Zoom

September 16-17, 2020

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred when ISEA was all set to hold its Third Social Enterprise Advocacy and Leveraging (SEAL Asia) Conference with the theme “Social Entrepreneurship and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: Towards Accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals.” ISEA was poised to co-convene this conference with UNESCAP on March 16-18, 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand.

As a regional network promoting social entrepreneurship for sustainable development, the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA) holds the SEAL Conference every two to three years to define an agenda of the sector as a relevant stakeholder in resolving key development issues and concerns in the region and beyond. The first Social Enterprise Advocacy and Leveraging (SEAL) Conference and First ISEA Regional Assembly was held in 2014 in Manila, Philippines with the theme Transforming Economies through Social Entrepreneurship: Towards a Post-2015 Agenda. The Second SEAL Conference and Second ISEA Regional Assembly was held in Bali, Indonesia in 2017 and had as theme Social Enterprise: Addressing Inequality for a Just Economy.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCAP released a report titled, ‘Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019,’ which assessed the region’s progress towards the 17 SDGs. The report shared that Asia and the Pacific will not achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030 if the region remains on its current trajectory. It also shared that for more than half of the goals, progress was either heading in the wrong direction or had stagnated. In fact, the region’s progress was deteriorating on SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation); SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).

Based on the Social Progress Index assessing the SDGs by Social Progress Imperative, a disturbing conclusion made at the global level was ‘at the current rate, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals until 2094.’ However, social entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs have been making significant impact as documented by the Schwab Foundation 2020 Impact Report ‘Two Decades of Impact’ and have been seen as potential game-changers in collaborative platforms to accelerate the SDGs.

The SEAL Conference was intended to develop and launch Social Entrepreneurship Platforms to Accelerate the SDGs (SE-SDG Acceleration Platforms) around the themes of Sustainable Livelihoods and Women’s Economic Empowerment promoting a set of Benchmarks for Transformational Partnerships and Women’s Economic Empowerment in Agricultural Value Chains (led by ISEA in partnership with Center for Social Innovation Promotion in Vietnam and Trubus Bina Swadaya with Yayasan Dompot Dhuafa in Indonesia) ; Health for All (led by Yayasan Dompot Dhuafa); Education and Decent Work (led by Gandang Kalikasan/Human Nature and the Asia-Pacific Bureau for Adult Education); Sustainable Consumption and Production and Circular Economy (led by World Fair Trade

Cooperating Organizations:



Media Partner:



Organization-Asia) and Rural Revitalization, Youth and Social Entrepreneurship (led by Rural Reconstruction China and the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement).

On February 19, 2020, ISEA's Regional Council had an emergency meeting and decided to move the Conference to September 2020. In a succeeding virtual consultation in May - June 2020, a unanimous decision was made to initiate a COVID-19 Social Enterprise Response and Visioning Effort (SERVE) Webinar Series leading up to a virtual SEAL Conference on September 16-17, 2020. The Webinar Series had two objectives: to share, network and collaborate towards a responsive recovery strategy for the social enterprise sector amid COVID-19 and to reconfigure the Social Entrepreneurship SDG Acceleration Platforms in a drastically changed context of a health and economic crisis hitting everyone including social enterprise stakeholders.

ISEA's COVID-19 SERVE Webinar Series from May 26 to August 4, 2020 brought to the fore the devastating impact of COVID-19 on social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve. This was exemplified by crafts communities, small producers and micro-entrepreneurs losing their markets or experiencing major disruptions in their supply chains; the stopping of operations of conference and cultural centers as well as hotels, restaurants, indigenous communities and villages engaged in sustainable tourism; and the logistical nightmares faced by social enterprises that had established seed to table systems directly linking farmers and fishers with urban consumers of organic produce and healthy food. In a survey conducted by ISEA among a sample of social enterprises in the Philippines, which was estimated at 164,000 before the pandemic, 96% were severely to moderately affected by the pandemic, with only 4% sustaining their operations, mainly those engaged in essential services as well as agricultural and food production catering to local markets and becoming suppliers of rice for the relief packages of local government units.

The COVID-19 SERVE Webinar Series likewise showcased inspirational social enterprise responses to the pandemic in ways that promoted the values of social equity, solidarity and sustainability in leaving no one behind to protect and cater to the unmet needs of the marginalized and most vulnerable sectors and communities. Amidst the pandemic, these social entrepreneurship responses demonstrated social innovation and creatively utilized ICT and social media to provide access to health and sanitation products and services, masks and personal protective gears, fresh and healthy food, agricultural services and livelihood, information, education and other basic needs. They effectively mobilized stakeholders and community assets, networks and cadres to bridge the digital divide, reaching the farthest and most vulnerable, and disrupting markets for the common good.

Inspired by the heartwarming initiatives featured in the COVID-19 SERVE Webinar Series spanning at least 10 countries in Asia, the Third SEAL Conference shall be a major regional initiative that would harness social entrepreneurship and social innovation as a pathway to ensure the recovery of the social enterprise sector in Asia as partners in leaving no one behind towards building back better. It shall directly contribute to the deliberations of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021 and the High Level Political Forum 2021 that would carry as theme: 'Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

As such, the theme of the SEAL Conference shall be 'Social Entrepreneurship and Cross Sectoral Collaboration: Ensuring the Recovery of Social Enterprises towards Leaving No One Behind in Building Back Better and Achieving Sustainable Development'. The platforms that are being reconfigured shall directly contribute to the 9 Sustainable Development Goals linked to pandemic

recovery, namely no poverty, zero hunger, decent work and inclusive growth, health and well-being, reduced inequality including gender equality, responsible consumption and production, climate action, peace justice and strong institutions and partnership for the goals (Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17)

Description and Objectives of the Conference

The Third SEAL Conference shall build on ongoing social entrepreneurship initiatives and the interest of various sectors to harness collaboration to ensure the recovery of the social enterprise sector amid COVID19 towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, focused on the 9 SDGs for pandemic recovery. It shall have the following objectives:

1. To provide a venue for developing and articulating an agenda for the effective recovery of social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve in Asia towards leaving no one behind in building back better;
2. To provide a venue for developing and articulating platforms where social entrepreneurship and cross sectoral collaboration can serve as key strategies towards leaving no one behind in building back better;
3. To provide a venue for dialogue between the social enterprise sector, civil society, government, the corporate sector, and multilateral agencies on opportunities for collaboration to assist the recovery of social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In keeping with the spirit of collaborative systems change, the Third SEAL Conference shall be led by social entrepreneurs and leaders of social enterprise resource institutions as well as social intrapreneurs from government, business and academe, who have been engaged in various efforts impacting on sustainable development and have an interest in cross sectoral collaboration to assist the recovery of social enterprises towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the SDGs.

With the combined support of the Japan Foundation Asia Center as well as Oxfam and the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok (through the Gender-transformative and Responsible Agricultural Investments in Southeast Asia Project), the COVID19 Social Enterprise Response and Visioning Effort (SERVE) Webinar Series and Round Table Discussions (RTDs) were made possible from May 26 to September 10, 2020. The webinars have featured social enterprise recovery efforts that inspired the ongoing reconfiguration of the social entrepreneurship platforms towards building back better and achieving the SDGs. These platforms are being reconfigured in RTDs towards further development, presentation or launching during the SEAL Conference on September 16-17, 2020. These initiatives to be presented or launched during the SEAL Conference shall serve as collaborative platforms for:

- Learning and exchange of experiences and best practices among stakeholders on social entrepreneurship and cross-sectoral collaboration focused on the recovery of social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the SDGs.
- Developing and projecting collective impact in the recovery of social enterprises and the poverty sectors they serve towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the SDGs.

- Developing and advocating changes in government policy and programs supportive to the recovery of social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve towards leaving no one behind in building back better and promoting social entrepreneurship and cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve the SDGs.
- Attracting and generating commitments and support from private donors and financial institutions as well as national and intergovernmental bodies to assist the recovery of social enterprises and the marginalized sectors they serve as well as to enhance the promotion and practice of social entrepreneurship and cross-sectoral collaboration towards leaving no one behind in building back better and achieving the SDGs.

The collaborative platforms that are undergoing various levels of development are:

- Health for All
- Food Security, Resilience and Women's Empowerment in Agricultural Value Chains
- Decent Work for All in Sustainable Value Chains
- Rural Revitalization, Youth and Social Entrepreneurship
- Technological Innovations for Sustainable Development

Participants

The conference aims to bring together 200 representatives from leading social enterprises and social enterprise resource institutions, civil society, businesses and governments who are engaged and interested in assisting the social enterprise sector recover amid COVID19 and enable social entrepreneurship and cross-sectoral collaboration as a means of implementation to build back better and achieve the SDGs. The core participants shall be social entrepreneurs and social intrapreneurs from ISEA's network and Schwab Fellows who have exhibited best practices in their respective contexts, and key civil society organizations and networks that have an interest to integrate social entrepreneurship in their strategies to build back better and accelerate the SDGs. Participants will be chosen to reflect a good geographic spread as well as diversity and representation doing work around the 9 SDGs for pandemic recovery and will include national and regional organizations. Attention will be paid to gender balance of presenters and participants.

Dates and Virtual Nature of Conference

The Conference shall be convened virtually via Zoom on September 16 to 17, 2020 from 10:00 AM-5:00 PM Manila, Beijing, Singapore (9:00 AM-4:00 PM Bangkok, Jakarta, Hanoi; 11:00 AM-6:00 PM Tokyo; 7:30 AM-2:30 PM Chennai). This shall serve as the culminating activity to the COVID19 Social Enterprise Response and Visioning Effort (SERVE) Asia Webinar Series and Round Table Discussions (RTD) conducted via Zoom every Tuesday from May 26 to September 8, 2020, with a final RTD on September 10, 2020. ISEA shall also convene its Third Regional Assembly on September 18, 2020 at 1-4:00 PM (Manila, Beijing, Singapore) to agree on a plan of action in pursuit of the agenda articulated by the SEAL Conference.