



Developing an Effective Policy Context for Social Enterprises in Asia and Europe

Concept Paper

OVERVIEW

As part of the British Council's Skills for Social Entrepreneurs programme and the Asia-Europe Foundations (ASEF) Public Health Network, senior policy influencers from across Asia and Europe will come together in Berlin for a two day policy dialogue to share and learn from experiences in the Social Enterprise sector in the two regions. The project builds on the social enterprise practitioner workshops that took place in Bangkok, Yangon and Hanoi in 2012 and responds to an evidenced need for 1) increased opportunities for sharing expertise between Asian and European Social Entrepreneurs and 2) a need to develop the support structures that allow social enterprises to flourish.

BACKGROUND

There is much debate around exactly how to define the concept of a social enterprise, indeed the approaches to interpretation of what a social enterprise is and should be doing is very much linked to the objective of the policy dialogue project. What is generally agreed however is that social enterprise represent an approach to some of the most pressing challenges of our time (public health, education, livelihoods) that brings together skills and resources that traditionally belong to business or to the private sector.

In the past decade, interest in social enterprise has grown steadily. With political, economic as well as demographic challenges, governments and public bodies in Asia and Europe have come to recognise the important and growing contribution of social enterprise to the future of many sectors including health and social care and education. They are looking to social enterprises, because of their potential to deliver sustainable services and bring positive impact on local economies. The social enterprise approach is increasingly seen as a way in which innovative solutions can be found for unmet needs, and market is 'created' or 'stimulated' to address these.

Most importantly, both in Asia and Europe, we find countries where this renewed attention on social enterprises has been accompanied by strong and specific policy support, aiming at providing better business environment for social enterprises. Existing government initiatives include policy support in terms of taxation, public procurement, financial market rules and regulations, and entrepreneurship supporting schemes.

Now that the movement is shared in the two regions, the time is ripe for consolidating existing policies and analysing their outcomes, to strengthen policy support for social enterprises and to promote implementation of such support in the countries with no existing policy frameworks. ASEF and British Council, with their experiences in working with various stakeholders across both regions, embark on an Asia-Europe project on social enterprise, specifically focusing on strengthening the policy support for the sector.

CO-ORGANISERS' PROGRAMMES

This project is a collaboration of the two programmes organised by ASEF and BC respectively.

ASEF Public Health Network

ASEF Public Health Network is a participatory platform which encourages public health dialogue in Asia and Europe. It provides space and opportunities for health and non-health sector representatives to share their knowledge and experience. Through research, workshops, meetings, public briefings and training, the Network strengthens co-operation between Asia and Europe to tackle common public health challenges, such as infectious diseases, pandemics and migrant health, and facilitates partnerships between multi-level actors from governments, international organisations, corporations, academia, non-profit organisations and the media.

Along with the overall objective to raise people's level of awareness on public health issues in Asia and Europe, one of the specific aims of the Network is to engage vulnerable groups, such as migrants or young people, which are most affected during any public health crisis or the lack of access to health services. The Network engages these groups through community-level initiatives to share their voices with policy makers.

In recent years, the Network has recognised that some of the greatest community needs are in the area of enabling access to healthcare services and that social enterprises can play a role to achieve that end. Social enterprises, by creating social capital, a sense of ownership, agency, and collective buy-in, can build a strong social programme with the momentum and initiative to adapt to changing circumstances. Social enterprises possess the potential to address public health issues of vulnerable groups and a number of examples from Asia and Europe demonstrate how social enterprises improve access to healthcare services. As such, since 2012, the Network has embarked on a new endeavour to promote social enterprises in Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) states and to contribute to the better business environment for social enterprises.

British Council's Skills for Social Entrepreneurs (SfSE)

The British Council's Skills for Social Entrepreneurs programme (SfSE) provides aspiring and practising social entrepreneurs as well NGO practitioners, community leaders, development workers and young people with skills training and professional mentoring along with access to UK expertise, global peer networks and funding opportunities that enable them to build successful social enterprises. The programme also forms partnerships with national and international organisations, businesses and social investors that fund, mentor and support social enterprises.

In addition, SfSE organises public-engagement activities and policy dialogues which promote the social enterprise model as well as social innovation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable economic development at local, national and international levels.

Through such initiatives, the programme showcases UK best practice and prominence in the sector, supports the development of CSR, social innovation and social enterprise in participating countries and fosters dialogue and partnerships between social entrepreneurs in the UK and participating countries.

Launched in 2009, the programme is currently run under various monikers in China, Croatia, Georgia, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Philippines, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Vietnam – and, as of August 2012, Malaysia.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this project is to enhance the capacity of ASEM states' policymakers to provide policy support for social enterprises.

Specifically, the project aims to:

- Contribute to policymakers' enhanced understanding on the work of social enterprises and the challenges faced by them;
- Facilitate exchanges and analyses of existing policy support for social enterprises in Asia and Europe; and
- Evaluate the scope for regional policy on social enterprises.

The participants will constitute of senior policy influencers from selected ASEM states. Through facilitating exchanges of existing policies from countries with a more advanced policy environment, the project will benefit participating policymakers from countries with less advanced policy support for social enterprises. The event will also aim to gather private sector enterprise specialists and high impact social entrepreneurs.

OUTPUTS

A report outlining the key lessons learnt and recommendations for future inter-regional dialogues on Social Enterprise

OVERARCHING THEMES

A Sustainable Economy: Opportunities for Social Entrepreneurs? – Social enterprise delivers sustainable economic growth while fostering social change and innovation. This business model is changing our modern economy. There is a growing consensus around the need to develop policies that incentivise Entrepreneurs to direct their activities towards the creation of social impact. This event brings together policymaker and influencers who are working to develop relevant policies and enabling mechanisms to support the growth of the social enterprise sector. And to understand what social entrepreneurs need and how government can respond to those needs.

SUB THEMES

1. **Delivering public services** – How can we develop policies that enable social enterprise to deliver effective and innovative public services?
2. **Social Investment Innovation** – Unleashing capital for social impact: Experiences from Asia and Europe.
3. **Regulatory and tax frameworks** – How can we support the growth of the social enterprise sector through regulatory frameworks?
4. **Evidencing social impact** – Since social entrepreneurs do not simply measure success in terms of profit and loss, social entrepreneurs need to be able to effectively measure the social or environmental impact of their work.

DATES AND VENUE

ASEF and BC will organise the Public Event and Policy Dialogue on 15 and 16 July 2013 at the British Council, Berlin, Germany.

PROGRAMME

Sunday, 14 July PM

Optional Welcome Dinner

Venue to be confirmed

Monday, 15 July AM

Optional Social Enterprise field visits

This will be an opportunity to showcase some of the best examples of Social Enterprises in Berlin and will be open to all delegates.

Monday, 15 July PM

Public Event – The role of Social Enterprise in developing a sustainable Global Economy'

This event will see two leading figures in the Social Enterprise space deliver two thought pieces on how Social Enterprises are changing Economies in Asia and Europe.

Tuesday 16 July AM/PM

The policy discussions will each begin with a two 10 minute introduction talks from each of the regions. The ensuing discussions will be facilitated to ensure clear outcomes are reached.

Panel discussion One

Delivering public services

With strong public values and principles of equality, social enterprise solutions can deliver effective and innovative public services. Examples range across health care, transport, social care and housing. What are the issues and how can policy-makers replicate best practice? How can government, business and civil society or the communities being served best work together and what mechanisms are needed for this to happen?

Panel discussion Two

Social Investment Innovation

The recent G8 has seen social investment being placed high on the agenda¹, with a specific focus on internationalising innovation in this field. Developments in impact investment across both Europe and Asia have led to an increasing focus on the design of effective mechanisms to allow for private sector capital to be invested in businesses that serve the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP), with risk being shared between the private and public sector. Interesting recent examples are Big Society Capital (UK) and the growth in interest globally in social impact bonds and impact investment. This session will share the latest insights in this fast growing area.

Panel discussion Three

Regulatory and tax frameworks

One of the most common barriers quoted by social enterprises across the globe is a lack of appropriate regulatory and tax frameworks. New frameworks have been created in many countries, we will hear about the impacts and the challenges involved in this.

¹ <http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/newsandevents/releases/Pages/UKleadingthewayinsocialinvestment.aspx>
(09/04/2013)

Panel discussion Four

Evidencing social impact

Policy makers and investors require clear evidence of social impact and added value. Yet across the broad spectrum of social and environmental issues, and especially for smaller organisations, it is difficult to agree the best frameworks. We will consider what common concepts are emerging and examples of where social enterprises have benefited.

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