

Understanding the Impact of Funding Practices in Southeast Asia

Introduction:

The purpose of this survey is to better understand how Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs) **in Southeast Asia** experience different funding structures—including unrestricted, restricted, one-year, and multi-year funding—and how these structures affect organisational capacity, programs, and relationships with funders.

We are interested in learning from a wide range of SPO experiences, including what has been helpful, what has been challenging, and how funding practices shape day-to-day decisions and long-term planning.

By participating, you are contributing to a broader effort to strengthen the philanthropic ecosystem in Southeast Asia. The findings will be publicly available and will be used to inform funders, intermediaries, and sector leaders about how funding structures impact SPOs, with the goal of supporting more thoughtful, realistic, and effective funding approaches over time. We also hope that SPOs can use the results to articulate and advocate for the types of funding that best support their work.

The survey should take approximately **12–15 minutes** to complete. **All responses will be analysed in aggregate with no identifiable data and treated confidentially**

Thank you for sharing your perspective.

Initial Definitions

1. [Open-ended] How does your organisation define “unrestricted funding”? Please describe what types of flexibility it includes, and any limits or expectations that still apply.
2. [Open-ended] How does your organisation define “restricted funding”? Please describe the types of limitations or conditions that apply to how these funds can be used.
3. [Open-ended] How does your organisation define “multi-year funding”? Please describe what counts as a multi-year commitment and how funds are typically disbursed (e.g. annual tranches, milestone payments).

For purposes of this survey, the following definitions apply:

- **Unrestricted funding:** Funding provided to an organisation without any donor-imposed restrictions on purpose, activity or timing, allowing the organisation to use the money at its own discretion for its charitable mission.
- **Restricted funding:** Funding given under the condition that it be used only for a specific purpose. This can range from funding designated for a single project with defined budget line items, to funding earmarked for a broader program or area of an organisation’s work (for example, funds may be used flexibly to support an organisation’s education-related activities, but may not be put towards its healthcare work).
- **Multi-year funding:** Funding that is committed for at least two years, whether disbursed in tranches or upfront.

Unless otherwise specified, please answer all questions with reference to your organisation’s most recently completed fiscal year.

A. Organisational Profile

A.1. Country of primary operation *[select all that apply]*

- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Indonesia
- Philippines
- Thailand

- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Brunei
- Timor-Leste
- Other country / countries outside Southeast Asia

A.2. What is your organisation's primary legal registration or operating form?

- Registered charity / non-profit organisation
- Social Enterprise / mission-driven business
- Other (please specify):

A.3. In what year was your organisation founded? *[four-digit text box]*

A.4. What is your organisation's primary focus area? *[Select up to 3]*

- Advocacy
- Animal rights and protection
- Arts and culture
- Anti-human trafficking
- Child rights and child protection
- Community development (including family support and social work)
- Climate and environment
- Education (including primary, secondary, tertiary and non-formal education)
- Employability and Training
- Healthcare (including maternal, child and family health)
- Healthcare (public health and disease prevention)
- Humanitarian aid and disaster relief
- Human rights
- Migrant, refugees and vulnerable community rights and services
- Press freedom
- Science and research
- Other (please specify): _____

A.5. What is your organisation's approximate annual expenditure in USD? *[text box]*

A.6. How many full-time staff does your organisation have (excluding volunteers)?

- 0-4
- 5-9
- 10-24
- 25-49
- 50-99
- 100+

A.7. Does your organisation currently have at least one staff member whose primary role is finance management? [Yes / No]

B. Details of Funding

Unrestricted funding: Funding provided to an organisation without any donor-imposed restrictions on purpose, activity or timing, allowing the organisation to use the money at its own discretion for its charitable mission.

B.1. Does your organisation receive any unrestricted funding (as defined above)? [Yes / No]

B.2. If yes, approximately what percentage of your total income comes from unrestricted funding?

- Under 10%
- 10 – 20%
- 21 – 49%
- 50 – 74%
- 75% or more

Multi-year funding: Funding that is committed for at least two years, whether disbursed in tranches or upfront.

B.3. Does your organisation receive any multi-year funding (as defined above), whether restricted or unrestricted? [Yes / No]

B.4. If yes, approximately what percentage of your total income comes from multi-year funding?

- Under 10%
- 10 – 20%
- 21 – 49%
- 50 – 74%
- 75% or more

B.5. Of the *multi-year grants* your organisation currently receives, approximately what percentage are: *[percentages should sum to approximately 100%]*

- **Unrestricted multi-year grants** (general operating support with no project or program earmarks): ____ %
- **Restricted multi-year grants** (earmarked in some way, whether to a program area or specific project): ____ %
- N/A – We do not receive multi-year grants

B.6. What is the average annual size of grants your organisation receives from each funding type? Please provide your best estimate; precise calculations are not required. *[Select one per column. If not applicable, select N/A.]*

Grant size (average annual)	Unrestricted funding	Restricted funding
Under USD 25,000	☐	☐
USD 25,000–49,999	☐	☐
USD 50,000–99,999	☐	☐
USD 100,000–249,999	☐	☐
USD 250,000+	☐	☐
Not applicable (N/A)	☐	☐

B.7. What are the sources of restricted and unrestricted funding in your organisation? *[Select up to 3 primary sources for each type of funding. If not applicable, select N/A]*

Funder type	Unrestricted funding	Restricted funding
High-net-worth individuals (HNWI)	☐	☐
Family foundations	☐	☐
Local / national foundations	☐	☐
International foundations	☐	☐
Corporate CSR / corporate foundations	☐	☐
Government	☐	☐
Organisation's own fundraising event(s)	☐	☐
Other (please specify): _____	☐	☐
Not applicable (N/A)	☐	☐

B.8. Approximately what share of your organisation's total staff time is spent on grant-related administration, reporting, and compliance for each funding type? [A rough estimate is sufficient]

Share of total staff time	Unrestricted funding	Restricted funding
Under 5%	☐	☐
5–10%	☐	☐
11–20%	☐	☐
21–30%	☐	☐
Over 30%	☐	☐
Not applicable (do not receive this funding type)	☐	☐

B.9. Does your organisation currently maintain financial reserves (e.g. unrestricted cash or reserves that can be used to cover core operating costs)? [Please select the option that best reflects your current situation. A rough estimate is sufficient]

- No financial reserves
- Less than 3 months of operating expenses
- Approximately 3-5 months of operating expenses
- Approximately 6-11 months of operating expenses

- 12 months or more of operating expenses
- Not sure

B.10. Over the past 3–5 years, has your organisation experienced a change in the share of funding that is unrestricted?

- Yes — unrestricted funding increased
- Yes — unrestricted funding decreased
- No significant change
- Not sure

B.10a. [If Yes (either increased or decreased)]: Approximately how did the share of unrestricted funding change as part of this shift?

Period	0–10%	11–20%	21–49%	50%+
Percentage of organisational unrestricted funding before the shift:	☐	☐	☐	☐
Percentage of organisational unrestricted funding after the shift:	☐	☐	☐	☐

B.10b. [If Yes (increased or decreased)]: What was the primary reason for the shift in the share of unrestricted funding? [Select one]

- Change in existing funder policy or approach (e.g. existing funder moved toward or away from unrestricted support)
- New funder relationship(s) providing unrestricted funding
- Loss or reduction of a major unrestricted funder
- Organisational growth or maturity (e.g. stronger systems, track record, governance)
- Strategic shift by our organisation (e.g. changes in programs, model, or focus areas)
- Diversification of funding sources outside traditional grants (e.g. earned income, fundraising events)
- External shock or contextual change (e.g. crisis, economic conditions, regulatory environment)
- Other (please specify): _____
- Not sure

B.10c. [If Yes (increase only)]: Thinking about the twelve-month period before you received more unrestricted funding, how would you characterize your organisation's performance in the following areas?

Scale:

1 = Very weak

2 = Weak

3 = Adequate

4 = Strong

5 = Very strong

N/A = Difficult to recall / not applicable

Categories:

- Financial stability
- Ability to retain staff
- Program quality
- Strategic planning capacity
- Ability to adapt or innovate programs in response to evolving community needs
- Relationship with funders

B.11. Over the past 3–5 years, has your organisation experienced a change in the share of multi-year funding?

- Yes — multi-year funding increased
- Yes — multi-year funding decreased
- No significant change
- Not sure / difficult to characterize

B.11a. [If Yes (increased or decreased)]: Approximately how did the share of multi-year funding change as part of this shift?

Period	0–10%	11–20%	21–49%	50%+
Percentage of organisational multi-year funding before the shift:	☐	☐	☐	☐
Percentage of organisational multi-year funding after the shift:	☐	☐	☐	☐

B.11b. [If Yes (increased or decreased)]: What was the primary reason for the shift in the share of multi-year funding?

- Change in existing funder policy or approach (e.g. existing funder(s) moved toward or away from multi-year commitments)
- New funder relationship(s) offering multi-year grants
- Loss or reduction of a major multi-year funder
- Organisational growth or maturity (e.g. stronger systems, track record, governance)
- Strategic shift by our organisation (e.g. multi-year programs or longer planning horizons)
- External shock or contextual change (e.g. crisis, economic conditions, regulatory environment)
- Changes in donor preferences or earmarking requirements
- Other (please specify): _____
- Not sure

B.11c. [If Yes (increase only)]: Thinking about the twelve-month period before you received more multi-year funding, how would you characterize your organisation's performance in the following areas?

Scale:

1 = Very weak

2 = Weak

3 = Adequate

4 = Strong

5 = Very strong

N/A = Difficult to recall / not applicable

Categories:

- Financial stability
- Ability to retain staff
- Program quality
- Strategic planning capacity
- Ability to maintain continuity of programs or services over time
- Relationship with funders

C. Impact of Multi-Year Funding

Multi-year funding: Funding that is committed for at least two years, whether disbursed in tranches or upfront.

C.1. How does multi-year funding affect the following areas of your organisation?

Scale:

1 = Strongly supports this area

2 = Somewhat supports this area

3 = No meaningful effect

4 = Somewhat constrains this area

5 = Strongly constrains this area

N/A = Not applicable (e.g. insufficient experience or too early to assess)

Categories:

- Ability to plan activities beyond a single year
- Ability to commit to multi-year staffing or longer-term contracts
- Ability to continue programs or services over time
- Ability to sustain or improve program quality over time
- Ability to withstand short-term funding shocks or delays
- Ability to make long-term strategic decisions
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

C.2. In your experience, which type of funding matters more for your organisation's overall effectiveness in achieving its mission?

- Multi-year funding commitment(s) (even if funding is restricted)
- Flexibility of use of funds (even if funding is short-term)
- Both flexibility of funds and multi-year funding commitments matter equally
- Neither makes a meaningful difference
- Not sure

D. Impact of Unrestricted Funding

Unrestricted funding: Funding provided to an organisation without any donor-imposed restrictions on purpose, activity or timing, allowing the organisation to use the money at its own discretion for its charitable mission.

D.1. How does your organisation principally use its unrestricted funding? *[Select up to 3 options that account for largest share]*

- Staff compensation and retention (salaries, benefits, training, well-being)
- Rent, utilities, and other core operating costs
- Covering gaps or shortfalls not fully funded by restricted grants
- Direct program delivery costs (e.g., materials, transportation, beneficiary support)
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems
- Organisational systems and infrastructure (finance, HR, compliance, technology)
- Strategic planning and organisational development
- Expanding, sustaining or deepening existing programs
- Piloting new programs or innovations
- Advocacy or policy engagement
- Crisis response or rapid adaptation
- Other (please specify):

D.2. How does unrestricted funding affect the following areas of your organisation?

Scale:

1 = Strongly supports this area

2 = Somewhat supports this area

3 = No meaningful effect

4 = Somewhat constrains this area

5 = Strongly constrains this area

N/A = Not applicable (e.g. insufficient experience or too early to assess)

A. Organisational Capacity:

- Ability to build financial reserves or maintain a financial buffer
- Ability to attract, retain and develop qualified staff
- Ability to maintain stable and effective leadership
- Ability to engage in longer-term strategic planning

- Ability to invest in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems
- Ability to invest in technology and organisational infrastructure
- Ability to strengthen internal management, coordination, or decision-making processes
- Ability to minimize time and resources spent on grant reporting, compliance, and administrative requirements
- Ability to engage in external relationships or advocacy that support organisational sustainability
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

B. Programmatic Outcomes

- Ability to reach more beneficiaries
- Ability to provide more intensive or higher-touch services
- Ability to improve quality of services or program content
- Ability to reach more marginalized or hard-to-reach populations
- Ability to experiment with new approaches or pilots
- Ability to scale or replicate successful pilots
- Ability to adapt programs in response to evolving community needs
- Ability to sustain programs during periods of uncertainty or crisis
- Ability to engage in advocacy or systems-change work related to program goals
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

C. Funder Relationships

- Ability to communicate openly and honestly with funders
- Ability to discuss challenges, risks, or setbacks with funders
- Ability to engage funders on broader organisational or strategic issues (beyond program metrics)
- Ability to meet reporting and compliance requirements in a proportionate way
- Ability to maintain a balanced and constructive power dynamic with funders
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

D.3. What has been the overall impact of unrestricted funding on your organisation's ability to achieve its vision and mission?

- Strongly negative
- Slightly negative
- No impact
- Slightly positive
- Strongly positive
- Not sure / too early to tell

D.4. [Open-ended] Have you experienced any challenges, tradeoffs, or unintended consequences associated with unrestricted funding? If so, please describe.

E. Impact of Restricted Funding

Restricted funding: Funding given under the condition that it be used only for a specific purpose. This can range from funding designated for a single project with defined budget line items, to funding earmarked for a broader program or area of an organisation's work (for example, funds may be used flexibly to support an organisation's education-related activities, but may not be put towards its healthcare work).

E.1. Approximately what percentage of your total grant funding comes from each of the following types? [Sum should be close to 100%]

- Highly restricted grants (e.g. tied to a specific project and budget on which funds must be spent): ____%
- Partially restricted grants (e.g. tied to a program, but with some flexibility in how the funds are spent within that program.): ____%
- Other restricted funding (please specify): ____%

E.2. How does your organisation's current reliance on restricted funding impact

the following areas?

Scale:

1 = Strongly supports this area

2 = Somewhat supports this area

3 = No meaningful effect

4 = Somewhat constrains this area

5 = Strongly constrains this area

N/A = Not applicable (e.g. insufficient experience or too early to assess)

D. Organisational Capacity:

- Ability to build financial reserves or maintain a financial buffer
- Ability to attract, retain and develop qualified staff
- Ability to maintain stable and effective leadership
- Ability to engage in longer-term strategic planning
- Ability to invest in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems
- Ability to invest in technology and organisational infrastructure
- Ability to strengthen internal management, coordination, or decision-making processes
- Ability to minimize time and resources spent on grant reporting, compliance, and administrative requirements
- Ability to engage in external relationships or advocacy that support organisational sustainability
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

E. Programmatic Outcomes

- Ability to reach more beneficiaries
- Ability to provide more intensive or higher-touch services
- Ability to improve quality of services or program content
- Ability to reach more marginalized or hard-to-reach populations
- Ability to experiment with new approaches or pilots
- Ability to scale or replicate successful pilots
- Ability to adapt programs in response to evolving community needs
- Ability to sustain programs during periods of uncertainty or crisis
- Ability to engage in advocacy or systems-change work related to program goals

- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

Funder Relationships

- Ability to communicate openly and honestly with funders
- Ability to discuss challenges, risks, or setbacks with funders
- Ability to engage funders on broader organisational or strategic issues (beyond program metrics)
- Ability to meet reporting and compliance requirements in a proportionate way
- Ability to maintain a balanced and constructive power dynamic with funders
- Other [please specify]:

[Optional]: Please use the space below if you would like to further explain your responses above [open-ended]

E.3. In what situations or for what types of work is restricted funding most helpful to your organisation? Please describe one example, if applicable.

E.4. In what situations or for what types of work has reliance on restricted funding been most challenging or limiting for your organisation? Please describe one example, if applicable.

E.5. If you were to receive unrestricted funding equivalent to approximately 21% or more of your current annual budget, what would be your top 3 priorities for using it?

- Increase staff compensation or benefits
- Hire additional staff (programmatic or operational)
- Strengthen organisational functions (e.g. finance, HR, operations)
- Invest in monitoring, evaluation, data, or learning systems
- Build financial reserves or strengthen financial sustainability
- Develop or update long-term organisational strategy
- Improve the quality of existing programs or services
- Expand or deepen programs (e.g. reach more beneficiaries or new groups)
- Pilot new programs or innovative approaches
- Invest in technology or organisational infrastructure

- Engage in advocacy or policy work
 - Other (please specify): _____
 - N/A — additional unrestricted funding would not materially change our priorities
-

F. Funder Relationships and Final Reflections

F.1. What do you think are the main barriers preventing more funders from giving unrestricted grants? *[select up to 3]*

- Preference for maintaining tight control over how funds are used
- Desire for clear project-level attribution of results
- Board or senior leadership resistance to general operating support
- Donor-designated or earmarked funds that restrict use
- Concerns about grantee financial management or potential misuse of funds
- Limited trust in, or familiarity with, grantee organisations
- Perception that unrestricted funding is less effective than project-based funding
- Pressure to demonstrate quick, tangible results
- Limited internal staff capacity to design, manage, or monitor unrestricted grants
- Prevailing sector norms or peer practices (e.g. few comparable funders offer unrestricted support)
- Regulatory or compliance requirements that constrain unrestricted commitments
- Misalignment between funder strategies and grantee priorities
- Other (please specify): _____

F.2. What do you think are the main barriers preventing more funders from giving multi-year grants? *[select up to 3]*

- Preference for short-term or annual funding cycles
- Internal budgeting or approval processes that limit multi-year commitments
- Board or senior leadership reluctance to commit funds beyond one year
- Uncertainty about future funding availability or organisational priorities
- Concerns about long-term grantee accountability or performance
- Desire to retain flexibility to reallocate funds annually
- Pressure to demonstrate short-term results
- Limited internal staff capacity to manage and oversee longer-term grants
- Prevailing sector norms or peer practices (e.g. few comparable funders offer multi-year support)

- Regulatory or compliance requirements that constrain multi-year commitments
- Misalignment between funder planning horizons and grantee needs
- Other (please specify): _____

F.3. [Open-ended] What is one change in funder behavior or practice that would most improve your organisation's effectiveness?

F.4. Would you be willing to participate in a short follow-up interview to discuss these issues in more depth? *[Yes/No]*

Please provide your contact details below. This information will not be shared publicly and will be used **only** to follow up with clarifying questions or to share aggregated findings from the study.

- **Name:** _____
- **Organisation:** _____
- **Role / Title:** _____
- **Email address:** _____