

Social Science Funding and Collaboration in the Indo-Pacific: Regional Summit

Siam Hall, Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai, Bangkok, Thailand

9-10 May 2024

The Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) and its partners are pleased to announce an inaugural meeting of Social Science Research Councils and Funding Organisations in the Indo-Pacific region. The meeting is co-hosted with the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) and convened in partnership with the Global Development Network (GDN) and UNESCO with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

AASSREC is an organization of national social science research councils, academies, and institutes committed to the promotion of regional cooperation in the field of social sciences among Asia-Pacific countries. The core focus of the summit is expansion of collaborative research among scholars in the region.

The two day summit, as well as the related UNESCO-AASSREC workshop on 8 May, will be a platform for knowledge sharing and connection and will focus on three key themes:

1. **Identifying opportunities for bilateral and multilateral collaboration and funding calls**, including discussion of innovation in program design, and shared research assessment, funding and impact evaluation challenges.
2. **Discussing opportunities to leverage social science research funding and expertise to achieve better outcomes through policy engagement and research translation.**
3. **Determining priorities** for AASSREC's new Indo-Pacific social science funding program.

The summit aims to promote regional cooperation and foster interdisciplinary research endeavors in the Asia-Pacific region. In line with the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST Programme), and its commitment to promoting sustainable development, AASSREC is focused on a transformative agenda aimed at advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The summit also seeks to develop ideas and frameworks, policies and incentives towards promoting regional cooperation and will serve as a forum for deliberating on strategies to mobilize to support quality research. Simultaneously, aligning with the SDGs and the imperative of leveraging public-private partnerships to bolster research initiatives, particularly those led by early and mid-career social scientists from underprivileged backgrounds.

Further, the summit will highlight how the social science community has to create unified objectives in response to the changing global environment. Using a collaborative mindset and common goal, the summit aims to address urgent societal issues by combining the knowledge of social scientists in the Asia-Pacific area and beyond. Focusing on the critical role played by research councils, the objective is to investigate novel ways to improve the impact of research and policy formulation.

The acknowledgement of social science research as a driver for multifaceted growth in the Asia-Pacific region is central to the summit's discourse. As synergy with the recommendations of the Asia Pacific MOST Conference organised by UNESCO on 21-22 May 2023 in Bangkok, the idea is to examine the transformative power of evidence-based policymaking and interdisciplinary collaborations, emphasizing the vital insights that social scientific disciplines may provide in tackling difficult academic challenges. By elucidating the

linkages between research findings and tangible policy outcomes, and to underscore the relevance of fostering research translation for impactful societal change.

The summit will serve as a seminal opportunity for stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to advancing social science research for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. Through concerted efforts and strategic partnerships, the Summit aims to chart a course towards a more equitable, inclusive, and resilient future, where the transformative potential of social science research is harnessed to address the complex challenges of the 21st century.

Convened as part of AASSREC's '[Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives across the Indo-Pacific](#)' program, the meeting will feature keynote speakers, interactive workshops, panel sessions, a networking dinner, and provide ample opportunities for participants to share their own experiences and practices with stakeholder organisations across the region.

Why is this summit being called?

The Indo-Pacific is home to 60% of the world's population and a growing percentage of global economic activity. It has the greatest linguistic, political, and religious diversity on Earth; two-thirds of the world's Indigenous peoples, and it faces significant social challenges relating to climate change, security, migration, health, rights and equality.

With rapidly developing regional economies and increasing integration into global knowledge networks, the Indo-Pacific has seen a significant growth over the past two decades in R&D activity^{1, 2}. Thousands of new and expanded research centres and institutions have been developed or re-formed around national priorities³, and tens of thousands of new publication outlets have been created for sharing of scholarly work.⁴ However, development of social science research systems has been marginal in this process and has lacked uniformity and coordination across the region.

This regional summit will bring together key social science stakeholders – researchers, research funders, research councils and policy makers - for a future-focused discussion about promoting collaboration, increasing investment and targeting resources to boost social science research capacity and enhance research impact.

Who should attend?

- **Senior representatives of general and social science research funding bodies** with a focus or interest in the Indo-Pacific region
- **Senior executives of regional research organisations** (universities, private-sector agencies, public policy think-tanks, regional development organisations and other non-profits)
- **Senior representatives of general and social science academies and councils**
- **Policy makers** with an interest in accessing and optimising evidence to inform public policy.

Invitations to attend

Note that this summit is invitation only, with identified organisations invited to nominate up to three representatives to attend. AASSREC also welcomes suggestions for other invitees with an interest in social

¹ [Building Development Capacities in Asia and the Pacific: Good Practices and Ways Forward for ADBI's Capacity Building Programs | Asian Development Bank](#)

² ² Regional Overview: Asia and the Pacific. *UNESCO Science Report, Towards 2030*. https://en.unesco.org/unesco_science_report/asia

² [Building Development Capacities in Asia and the Pacific: Good Practices and Ways Forward for ADBI's Capacity Building Programs | Asian Development Bank](#)

³ https://en.unesco.org/unesco_science_report/asia

⁴ [Open Access Publishing in Asian Countries: Trends and Policy Perspectives | Frontiers Research Topic \(frontiersin.org\)](#)

science research funding in the Indo-Pacific region. To discuss potential additional invitations, please contact info@aassrec.org.

Visa support and bursaries

AASSREC and NRCT will assist with invitation letters for visa purposes for any registered attendee. While there is no cost to attend the summit or the networking dinner, invited delegates are requested to make their own arrangements for travel and accommodation. AASSREC has a limited number of bursaries (flights, accommodation, and airport transfers) available to enable the participation of delegates who require financial support. Priority for bursaries will be given to representatives of organisations in low-income countries. Individuals seeking a bursary to support attendance should complete the respective section of the online registration form by **22 March 2024**.

Accommodation

The Regional Summit will be held in Siam Hall at the [Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai](#), Bangkok, Thailand. The Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai will provide a special accommodation rate, subject to availability, for registered attendees who book accommodation on or before 15 April 2024 (THB 4900 per night for single occupancy for a Superior Panorama room and THB 5100 per night for double occupancy). A link to access the discounted rate will be provided to registered attendees. Attendees can also book accommodation at the hotel directly via the Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai [website](#).

Registration

Delegate registrations from invited organisations must be received by **18 April, 2024**.

Individuals seeking a bursary to support attendance must register and apply by **22 March, 2024**.

Register here: <https://events.humanitix.com/social-science-funding-and-collaboration-in-the-indo-pacific-regional-summit>

Program Overview

Each day will feature an array of international speakers and provide opportunities for small group discussion and networking.

Day One: Thursday 9 May – Funding Social Science research in the region

Time	Session	Speakers/Topics
09:00	Welcome Addresses	AASSREC President, Professor Dhananjay Singh
09:10	Introductory Remarks	Dr Wiparat De-ong, Executive Director NRCT/Minister (TBC) Ms Soohyun Kim, Regional Director, UNESCO Office in Bangkok Dr Matthew L. Wallace, Senior Program Specialist, IDRC
09:25	AASSREC Program Overview	Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives across the Indo-Pacific AASSREC Secretary-General, Michelle Bruce
09:40	Panel Session 1 Chair: Francesco Obino, Director of Programs, Global Development Network (GDN)	Knowing Social Sciences: Can evidence make Asia's research systems more performing and more resilient? Speakers will explore: - their respective motivation, as actors occupying different roles in the research system, for high-quality evidence on the state of the research system

	<p>Speakers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inaya Rakhmani, Director, Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia 2. Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR 3. Edgard Rodriquez, IDRC: 4. Carl Vannetelbosch, UNESCO (TBC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gaps in evidence that hamper their work, and evidence that is expected to advance their work in significant ways - their own role in the production of evidence on the research system they operate in
10:25	Q&A Session	
10:40	Break	
11:10	<p>Panel Session 2</p> <p>Chair: Dr Chris Hatherly, CEO, The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA)</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sattakamol Kiatipanich, Director of the Division of Research and Innovation Funding Management, National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) 2. Angie Bexley, Head of Technical Delivery Partnerships and GEDSI, KONEKSI 3. Chintia Asmilia Sari, Senior Program Manager, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Jakarta 4. Dilushi Munasinghe, Scientific Officer, National Science Foundation (NSF) Sri Lanka 	<p>Innovation, impact & translation</p> <p>The session will tackle the growing pressure on research funders to fund ‘more than just research’, and its implication for social sciences in Asia.</p> <p>Speakers will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluating research outcomes and impacts - Advancing Gender Equality, Diversity & Social Inclusion - Supporting capacity building - Policy impact by design - Non-research roles in research projects <p>Key Questions</p> <p>What are the benefits and challenges of funding research through bilateral partnership, rather than within any one nation state?</p> <p>How does your organisation strike a balance between supporting blue-sky and applied (or mission-led) research, and how prominently do social science researchers feature among its grantees?</p> <p>How does your organisation work to promote gender equality and social inclusion in the knowledge and research sector and what have been the outcomes of these efforts so far?</p> <p>How does your organisation try to ensure the impact of the research that it funds and what have been the outcomes of these efforts so far?</p> <p>How is your organisation approaching the evaluation of its program, in terms of (as relevant) evaluating process, outputs, outcomes and impact?</p> <p>How does your organisation support open access to research data and research outputs and what challenges is your organisation encountering in ensuring such open access is maintained?</p>

		<p>How has your organisation sought to balance capacity building with research impact; potentially including how you're conceptualising capacity building among both researchers and policy makers?</p> <p>What processes does your organisation use to identify and select priority themes? To what extent have these themes been established to allow for innovative ideas and proposals from researchers?</p>
11:55	Q&A Session	
12:10	Participant Workshop/ Discussion in small groups	<p>Innovation, impact & translation</p> <p>In small groups, participants will share their own experiences, examples, and suggestions for best practice innovation, impact, and translation.</p>
12:35	Groups report back	The outcomes of the small group discussions will be reported back to all delegates.
13:00	Lunch	
14:00	<p>Panel Session 3</p> <p>Chair: Dr. Thittaporn Ganokratanaa, NRCT</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Peter Sy, Assistant Vice President for Digital Transformation, University of the Philippines and Chairman of the Privacy Experts Group for eHealth (DOH/DOST) 2. Dr. Mathieu Denis, Senior Director, Head of the Centre for Science Futures, International Science Council (ISC) 3. Prof. Bhavani Rao, UNESCO Chair on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, Amrita University, India 	<p>Funding Social Science Research in the Indo-Pacific: A focus on Ethics & AI</p> <p>The session will explore the impact of changing demands and research practices on funders' internal processes.</p> <p>Discussion points may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Ethics - Managing use and uptake of ChatGTP and other AI tools <p>Key Questions</p> <p>How does your organisation approach the governance and monitoring of research ethics among researchers that you support?</p> <p>Given changing research methods being employed by social science researchers, including new experimental and computational methods, how fit for purpose are traditional norms of "informed consent" for ensuring research on human subjects is ethically sound?</p> <p>What new data integrity challenges is your organisation observing or confronting in social science research practice?</p> <p>What safeguards are required to prevent corruption or manipulation of social science research data into the future, and maintain public confidence in social science research?</p> <p>How does your organisation ensure that researchers are attentive to, and deal appropriately with, the ethical challenges associated with research involving marginalised, disenfranchised, or vulnerable communities?</p> <p>How widespread is the use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) to prepare research grant proposals and/or generate research outputs</p>

		in your organisation's experience, what constraints does your organisation place upon this practice, and how are those constraints enforced?
14.45	Q&A Session	
15:00	Participant Workshop/ Discussion in small groups	Funding challenges and innovation in funding processes and tools In small groups, participants will share their own experiences, internal processes, and suggestions for addressing common challenges such as managing AI, Research Ethics, Peer Review and Open Access.
15:30	Break	
16:00	Groups report back	The outcomes of the small group discussions will be reported back to all delegates.
16:30	Session summary & update on research priorities	Summary of Day One and Update on live survey on priority research themes
17:00	Session close	NRCT representative
19:00	Networking dinner	Siam Hall, Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai

Day Two: Friday 10 May

Time	Session	Speakers/Topics
09:00	Welcome	Dr Matthew L. Wallace, Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
9:10	<p>Panel Session 4</p> <p>Chair: Professor Fleur Johns, Chair of AASSREC Policy & Strategy Committee and Professor of International Law, UNSW</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Nicole Arbour, Executive Director, Belmont Forum 2. Prof. Agus Haryono, President of IRIF/ Deputy Chairman for Research and Innovation Facilitation, BRIN 3. Francesco Obino, Director of Programs, Global Development Network (GDN) 	<p>Collaborating with impact</p> <p>Discussion to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Models of successful collaboration - Public-private and philanthropic partnerships - Bi-lateral and multi-lateral joint action programs - Research and policy forums <p>Key Questions:</p> <p>Panellists in this session will address some or all of the following questions:</p> <p>What co-funding or other collaborative arrangements for the promotion of research does your organisation currently have in place?</p> <p>With what partners are these collaborations being conducted (e.g., other nations' funding bodies; funding bodies supporting natural science or humanities research; private sector organisations; international or regional organisations; etc.) and how are they structured?</p> <p>What further models of co-funding or collaboratively funding social science research in the Indo-Pacific region seem most promising to you, and potentially appropriate for AASSREC?</p> <p>Participants may wish to discuss any or all of the following models:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deep/close coordination without any centralised pooling of funds (e.g. the Belmont Forum: https://www.belmontforum.org/); • sharing/pooling of funds and concentrating responsibility for their management and disbursement in one dedicated agency/management team (e.g., Canada’s Think Tank Initiative https://tti.idrc.ca/; GDN; Europe’s NORFACE https://www.norface.net/); and • the matching/teaming of complementary funding sources at the international and national level, potentially including industry funding sources (European Research Area Partnerships European Partnerships in Horizon Europe).
10:00	Q&A Session	
10:15	Participant Workshop/ Discussion in small groups	Best practice and new opportunities for collaboration In small groups, participants will share their own experiences (successes and challenges) in facilitating international collaboration programs and discuss new opportunities and options for collaboration in the region.
10:45	Break	
11:15	Groups report back	The outcomes of the small group discussions will be reported back to all delegates.
11:45	Facilitated discussion	Social Science Research Priorities for the Asia Pacific Participants will review the results of the research theme survey and discuss and develop a research agenda for the AASSREC Boosting Social Sciences in the Indo-Pacific Program.
13:15	Lunch	
14:30	Panel Session 5	Building a community of practice through AASSREC and UNESCO MOST Program Three speakers will react to the discussions had during the past 1.5 days, on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country-level experiments and initiatives that have emerged during the summit as desirable and scalable - Thematic priorities that have gathered consensus (also based on on-site survey results) - Common aspirations for social science research funding in the region.
15:30	Break	
16:00	Keynote Address	Dr Shamika Ravi, Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, and Secretary to Government of India. The role of social science research in influencing policy in the Asia Pacific region.
16:45	Closing address	Professor Dhananjay Singh, AASSREC President
17:00	Session close	