

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

Siam Hall, Eastin Grand Hotel Phayathai, Bangkok, Thailand

9-10 May 2024

PANEL SESSIONS, WORKSHOPS AND FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS

PANEL SESSION 1: Knowing Social Sciences: Can evidence make Asia's research systems more performing and more resilient?

In the dynamic landscape of social science research, evidence plays a pivotal role in shaping the performance and resilience of research systems. As actors within this system, the motivations of social science researchers, policymakers and funding agencies regarding high-quality evidence are diverse yet interconnected. Academics strive for evidence to enrich their scholarly enquiries and contribute to knowledge advancement. Policymakers seek timely and actionable evidence to formulate informed policies that address societal challenges. Funders demand evidence to allocate resources efficiently and maximize impact. Hence, the generation and utilization of robust evidence are imperative for fostering a vibrant research ecosystem.

Speakers in this panel discussion will address the following questions:

- How can stakeholders collaboratively address the existing gaps in evidence to enhance the performance and resilience of research systems in the Indo-Pacific region?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure the production and utilization of high-quality evidence that reflects the diversity of perspectives and challenges within the region?
- In what ways can international collaboration and funding mechanisms be optimized to support the generation, dissemination, and uptake of evidence in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in South Asia?
- How can we effectively integrate Indigenous knowledge systems and local perspectives into the evidence base of social science research in the Indo-Pacific, recognizing their value in informing sustainable and culturally relevant solutions to regional challenges?

PANEL SESSION 2: Innovation, Impact & Translation

Against the backdrop of burgeoning expectations on research funders to transcend traditional paradigms and catalyze tangible societal change, this session will focus on the imperative of fostering innovation, maximizing impact, and facilitating the seamless translation of research findings into actionable insights and policy interventions.

Within this thematic framework, the session will serve as a forum for in-depth exploration and critical discourse on new thinking and paradigms that will contribute to the advancement of social sciences in the Indo-Pacific region. Speakers will engage in open dialogue focused on evaluating research outcomes and impacts, unraveling the intricate interplay between funding mechanisms, and the socio-economic fabric of Asia. Moreover, the session will deliberate on strategies for advancing gender equity, diversity, and social inclusion within the knowledge ecosystem, recognizing the inherent value of inclusive research practices in driving sustainable development.

In this panel session, discussions will be guided by the following questions:

- **Bilateral Partnership Dynamics:** How can funders navigate geopolitical dynamics in bilateral partnerships while fostering innovation and addressing challenges and opportunities?

- **Ensuring balanced Research Investment portfolios:** What strategies can organizations employ to balance support for exploratory research and mission-driven projects, ensuring a robust representation of social science researchers across their programs?
- **Gender Equity and Social Inclusion:** What concrete strategies can funding organizations employ to dismantle systemic barriers and promote gender equity, diversity, and social inclusion within the knowledge sector, and what measurable outcomes have emerged from these initiatives?
- **Maximizing Research Impact:** How can funding bodies adopt holistic approaches to maximize the societal impact of funded research, encompassing not only outputs and outcomes but also facilitating effective translation and dissemination of findings to diverse stakeholders?
- **Evaluation Frameworks:** In what ways can organizations refine their evaluation frameworks to capture the multifaceted dimensions of research impact, transcending conventional metrics and embracing a nuanced understanding of process, outputs, outcomes, and enduring societal change?

PANEL SESSION 3: Funding Social Science Research in the Indo-Pacific: A focus on Ethics & AI

Against the backdrop of rapid technological advancements and shifting research paradigms, this session will engage in a nuanced exploration of the ethical imperatives and governance frameworks underpinning the use of Artificial Intelligence and other advanced technologies in social science research in the Indo-Pacific region. From delineating robust mechanisms for ensuring research integrity, to navigating the ethical challenges inherent in engaging with marginalized communities, the discussion encompasses multifaceted dimensions critical to the ethical conduct of research in a technologically-driven era.

In this panel session, discussions will be guided by the following questions:

- **Governance of Research Ethics:** How do funding organizations navigate the complex terrain of research ethics governance, and what strategies are employed to ensure adherence to ethical principles among researchers supported by these organizations?
- **Adapting Informed Consent:** With the advent of novel research methods and computational approaches, how can traditional norms of informed consent be tailored to suit the ethical requirements of contemporary social science research, particularly concerning studies involving human subjects?
- **Data Integrity Challenges:** What emerging challenges related to data integrity are observed or encountered in the practice of social science research, and how can funding bodies collaborate with researchers to mitigate these challenges and uphold the credibility of research outcomes?
- **Safeguarding Data Integrity:** What safeguards are required to mitigate the risk of corruption or manipulation of social science research data, thereby upholding public trust and confidence in the integrity of research endeavors?
- **Ethical Engagement with Vulnerable Communities:** How can organizations ensure that researchers navigate the ethical complexities inherent in conducting research with marginalized or vulnerable communities, fostering ethical sensitivity and inclusivity in research practices?
- **AI Ethics and Constraints:** To what extent should generative AI, such as ChatGPT, be supported in the preparation and assessment of research proposals and the generation of research outputs? What ethical constraints and oversight mechanisms should be implemented by funding organizations to ensure responsible AI usage in social science research?

PANEL SESSION 4: Collaborating with impact:

This session will focus on the intricacies of successful collaboration in driving meaningful societal and policy impact. Against the backdrop of evolving research landscapes and transnational challenges, speakers will explore collaboration

models that have demonstrated efficacy in achieving impact while also confronting the challenges inherent in international and cross-cultural engagement. Through scholarly discourse and critical reflection, participants will delve into the intricacies of co-funding arrangements, philanthropic partnerships, and the convergence of research and policy forums. By interrogating the underlying structures and dynamics of collaborative initiatives, the session endeavors to distill actionable insights and best practices conducive to forging robust partnerships with enduring societal resonance.

In this panel session, discussions will be guided by the following questions:

- **Current Collaborative Arrangements:** How do organizations establish successful co-funding and collaborative arrangements that promote impactful research, and what mechanisms are required to facilitate seamless collaboration with diverse partners?
- **Partnership Landscape:** With whom are these collaborations forged, spanning national and international funding bodies, private sector entities, and regional organizations, and how are these partnerships structured to optimize synergy and impact?
- **Emerging Models of Collaboration:** What innovative models of co-funding and collaborative funding hold most promise for fostering impactful social science research in the Indo-Pacific region, and how can institutions like AASSREC adapt these models to their context?

Participants will be encouraged to consider models such as deep coordination without centralized pooling of funds, sharing or pooling of funds with centralized management, and the matching of complementary funding sources at international and national levels, including industry contributions. Drawing insights from successful initiatives like the Belmont Forum, GDN, Canada's Think Tank Initiative, and Europe's NORFACE, the session aims to distill actionable strategies for nurturing collaborative partnerships that transcend borders and catalyze societal transformation.

PARTICIPANT WORKSHOPS: PANELS 2, 3 & 4

Following Panel Sessions Two, Three and Four, participants will convene in small groups to discuss and share insights, drawing upon their individual experiences and case studies pertinent to the thematic focus of each panel session. Attendees will be encouraged to explore and generate suggestions aimed at addressing key challenges and opportunities identified during each panel discussion, with the aim of proposing actionable recommendations and innovative solutions aligned with the overarching theme.

Each participant workshop will run for 25-30 minutes with a representative from each group invited to provide a 2-minute summation of the top three priority issues, to all attendees.

Additional personalised input from each participant can be submitted online during each workshop.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION TO IDENTIFY PRIORITY RESEARCH THEMES

The '*Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives across the Indo-Pacific*' program is focused on the opportunities to enhance the impact of social science research and improve lives for people across the region. These objectives will be achieved by mapping and understanding the status and opportunities for social sciences in the region, supporting and funding priority research, and connecting social science research organizations, regional funding organizations and policymakers to collaborate on social science initiatives.

Building on, and leveraging, priorities identified during the UNESCO Workshop earlier in the week, this discussion will provide further opportunities to identify and discuss emerging and priority social science research themes across the Asia-Pacific region.

All delegates will be invited to contribute to this process, identifying key priority themes for social science that can be addressed through existing or future programs. Participants will be asked to reflect on the issues emerging from the

UNESCO Workshop and the Regional Summit while also leveraging their own experience, knowledge, and insights to identify these key priority themes.

The priority themes identified at the Summit will inform the research agenda that the AASSREC program “Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives across the Indo-Pacific” will deploy through research grants, policy papers, and researcher mentoring activities.

PANEL SESSION 5: Building a community of practice through AASSREC :

Three speakers will react to the discussions held during the Summit, focusing on the following topics:

- 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.
- Potential linkages with the UNESCO MOST Program.