



# **Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions**

## **Country Brief: Thailand**

**August 2016**



**INSIGHT  
WITH  
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## About the British Council

The British Council was founded to create a friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world. The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We call this work cultural relations.

We work in over 100 countries, connecting millions of people with the United Kingdom through programmes and services in the English language, the Arts, Education and Society. We believe these are the most effective means of engaging with others, and we have been doing this work since 1934.

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## About Plymouth University

Plymouth University is one of the leading modern universities in the UK, ranked in the top seven institutions under the age of fifty by Times Higher Education. The University was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2012, and was the first in the world to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark in recognition of working as a genuine social enterprise, caring for communities, and protecting the planet. The study has been led by SERIO, an applied research unit based at Plymouth University, in collaboration with colleagues from the Institution's Futures Entrepreneurship Centre.

## Using this report

### Overview

This research seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs) with a particular focus on those operating within an international context. Specifically it explores:

- Existing partnerships between HEIs and social enterprise across twelve countries, spanning four continents;
- The benefits of existing cooperation between social enterprise and HEIs;
- The impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders; and,
- The role of HEIs in supporting an increased awareness of social entrepreneurship as a career option, and in assisting start-ups and early growth.

In May 2016, the British Council published the core research report<sup>1</sup> emanating from this study - *'Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions'* – which placed a deliberate focus on the macro international landscape for engagement between HEIs and social enterprise. In contrast, this report on Thailand provides a specific country focus, enabling a more granular view of social enterprise activity among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A similar report has been produced for each of the eleven other countries that participated in this study.

It is expected that the findings of this research will:

- Facilitate dialogue, networking and knowledge exchange, opening up avenues for greater international cooperation between HEIs, and a stronger global narrative on social value and the contribution of this activity to achieving social development goals.
- Assess and promote the role of HEIs in social enterprises and the benefits of existing co-operation, based upon an analysis of opportunities and challenges related to collaboration.
- Provide a body of evidence which supports and informs further research and collaboration opportunities.

All research outputs from this study, including this report, will be made available on the British Council Social Enterprise webpage: [www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports)

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to hereon after as 'the global research report'.

## Introduction

### Outlining the research

This research is set against a context of global growth in higher education, and seeks to understand and enhance the role of international cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs). The study, led by Plymouth University for the British Council, is one of the first to attempt to identify the range of HEI activity in the social enterprise sector. Specifically, the study maps and explores existing partnerships between HEIs and SE; the benefits of existing cooperation; and the impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders.

One of the challenges of conducting social enterprise research on a global level is that the term is governed by different legal frameworks, terminology, and cultural approaches. For this study, the researchers adopted the [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk) definition, which considers a social enterprise to be:

*“A business that trades to tackle social problems, improve communities, people’s life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community”*

### Study approach

The global research was undertaken with over two hundred HEIs drawn from Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom and the USA. These twelve countries were selected to provide a wide range of different geographical locations, higher education structures, and levels of economic development and rates of growth. The study comprised three core methodological stages:

Approach	Overview
<b>Desk-based review of social enterprise activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This included academic and grey literature, as well as media sources such as HEI and news websites, blogs, and third party partner organisation websites.</li> <li>▪ The review was supported by consultations with British Council representatives from each country and explored country-specific issues such as variations in the definition of social enterprise, legal structures for the sector, and challenges to growth.</li> </ul>
<b>HEI survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An online survey was sent to all known HEIs in each country to map social enterprise activity, and to explore the benefits and challenges of partnership working.</li> <li>▪ The survey was disseminated to 993 HEIs, yielding a return of 205 (a 21% response rate).</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In-depth semi-structured interviews with up to three HEIs from each country, to capture their social enterprise activity and partnerships in more detail.</li> <li>▪ This data was combined with analysis from the preceding two stages to formulate a series of case studies of practice.</li> </ul>

With specific regard to Thailand, 118 HEIs were invited to complete a survey, yielding a return of 61 – a response of 52%. Where possible, the survey was targeted toward named contacts with knowledge of, or responsibility for social enterprise at their institution. Whilst this approach was felt to provide the most rounded view of cross-institutional engagement and practice, it should be noted that any views expressed may not necessarily reflect the official stance of their HEI.

The survey findings have been exemplified and elaborated upon through the inclusion of case studies of practice from two Thai HEIs, and consultation with representatives from the British Council team in Thailand.

### **The British Council's social enterprise programme**

Social enterprises address social and environmental problems through innovative solutions that improve people's lives in our communities and societies. The British Council's global social enterprise programme draws on the UK experience in social enterprise to promote its growth around the world. We build capacity in the sector, forge international networks, and support policy leaders to create ecosystems in which social enterprise and social investment can thrive. Our work supports positive social change, inclusive growth and sustainable development while building trust and creating opportunities between the UK and other countries.

## The landscape for social enterprise

### Country overview

There are approximately 170 institutions of higher education in Thailand; the responsibility for whom is governed by The Office of Higher Education Commission. In 2013, there were just under 2.5 million student enrolments in Thailand, representing around 3.6% of the total population.<sup>2</sup> This mirrors the average number of student enrolments as a proportion of the total population across all 12 study countries reported in this research; with the mean average across the study countries also standing at 3.6%.

The term 'social enterprise' is widely used across Thailand; cemented by the establishment of the Thai Social Enterprise Office in 2010. However, feedback from consultations with in-country representatives suggests that there is still a common misconception that social enterprises are not-for-profit organisations; and so more understanding regarding how they differ is still needed.

### Approaches to social enterprise

Thailand has created a strong social enterprise sector; operating within a spectrum of operational structures, and across various sectors of the economy. Whilst social enterprises in many countries can trace their origins to non-profit organisations diversifying their income away from grant-funded activity; social enterprises in Thailand are often found to be independent, new start-up ventures.

It is understood that SE in Thailand is relatively well-established; helped in part by the strong government support that the sector has had over the last five years or so. However with no separate legal category available for SEs, many are either recognised as non-profit organisations or registered as commercial entities, and thus the size of the sector is difficult to quantify.

### Support for social enterprise

Established in 2010 under a previous government, the Thai Social Enterprise Office (TSEO) is an independent government agency designed to be a national focal point for promoting social innovation and social enterprise in Thailand. As one of few countries that have a strong, explicit commitment from the government to develop the social enterprise sector, SEs in Thailand have benefited from consultancy provision, workshops and promotion activities. Following the new government coming to power in 2014, the National Reform Council (NRC) Committee has proposed a bill on Social Enterprise to promote continued support for SE. The bill advocates the establishment of a new independent regulating body, the Office of the National Social Enterprise Promotion (ONSEP); an SE commission to coordinate policy and a new SE Fund to provide financial support for social enterprises. The draft bill, currently under review, also proposes that a regulatory framework should be established to encourage the development of social enterprises; and that tax incentives for private businesses are awarded in order to encourage them to spend a proportion of their profits on addressing societal needs.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence suggests that there are also an increasing number of national and international SE support organisations; developing new social enterprises and promoting the advancement of the sector as a whole. Nationally, Bangkok-based Change Fusion is a prominent not-for-profit organisation in Thailand; supporting and investing in new social enterprises, and working to develop a more established ecosystem for them to operate in. For example, one of Change Fusion's projects involves a partnership with Banpu, a leading energy company in Southeast Asia.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016). Enrolment by level of education. Available at: [http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT\\_DS](http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS)

<sup>3</sup> International Business Publications USA (2016). Thailand: Doing Business and Investing in Thailand Guide. Volume 1: Strategic, Practical Information and Regulations.

The 'Banpu Champions for Change' project supports young Thai social entrepreneurs by providing seed and scale funding for new start-up social enterprises. Local Alike is one such enterprise supported by the Banpu project, and is a community-based tourism business aiming to preserve cultural traditions while providing economic opportunities for local people. Similarly, prestigious international SE support organisations, such as UnLtd and Ashoka, are supporting new start-ups through incubation programmes and competitive grants.

There is also a growing number of social enterprise networks in operation across Thailand. For example, the Thai Young Philanthropist Network (TYPN) was founded in 2008 and exists to connect young social-minded professionals and empower them to design and implement high-impact social enterprises. Similarly, the Ma.D Hub for Social Entrepreneurs is a social enterprise in itself, as well as being an SE networking organisation; designed to build partnerships and undertake capacity building programmes to accelerate the expansion of the sector.

### **The role of HEIs**

The higher education sector is becoming a key source of support for social enterprises in Thailand; and institutions are engaging in various partnerships to promote and develop the sector, both locally and internationally. For example, WeDu is a social enterprise that exists to empower young women from countries across Asia to lead the development of their home communities through education and mentoring. Various universities in Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia, amongst others, are partners of this enterprise; providing workshops, financial support and access to higher education for many disadvantaged young women.

In terms of academic support, HEIs in Thailand are beginning to integrate the concept of social enterprise into the taught curriculum. For example, Thammasat University now offers an accredited Bachelor's degree in Global Studies and Social Entrepreneurship (GSSE); and North Chiang Mai University runs the Social Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia Programme, in collaboration with Purdue University, USA. This course is based on an experiential learning model, designed to combine classroom-based analysis and strategy building, with study abroad modules based within local communities.

Other forms of support commonly offered by HEIs in Thailand include youth camps and workshops, run with the aim to educate, train and inspire socially conscious entrepreneurship. For example, the Sasin Centre for Sustainability Management was created through a partnership between Chulalongkorn University and the Corporate Responsibility and Ethics Association for Thai Enterprise (CREATE). Here, the principles of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are promoted through curriculum development, corporate training and consulting, research, and outreach.

## Overview of social enterprise activity

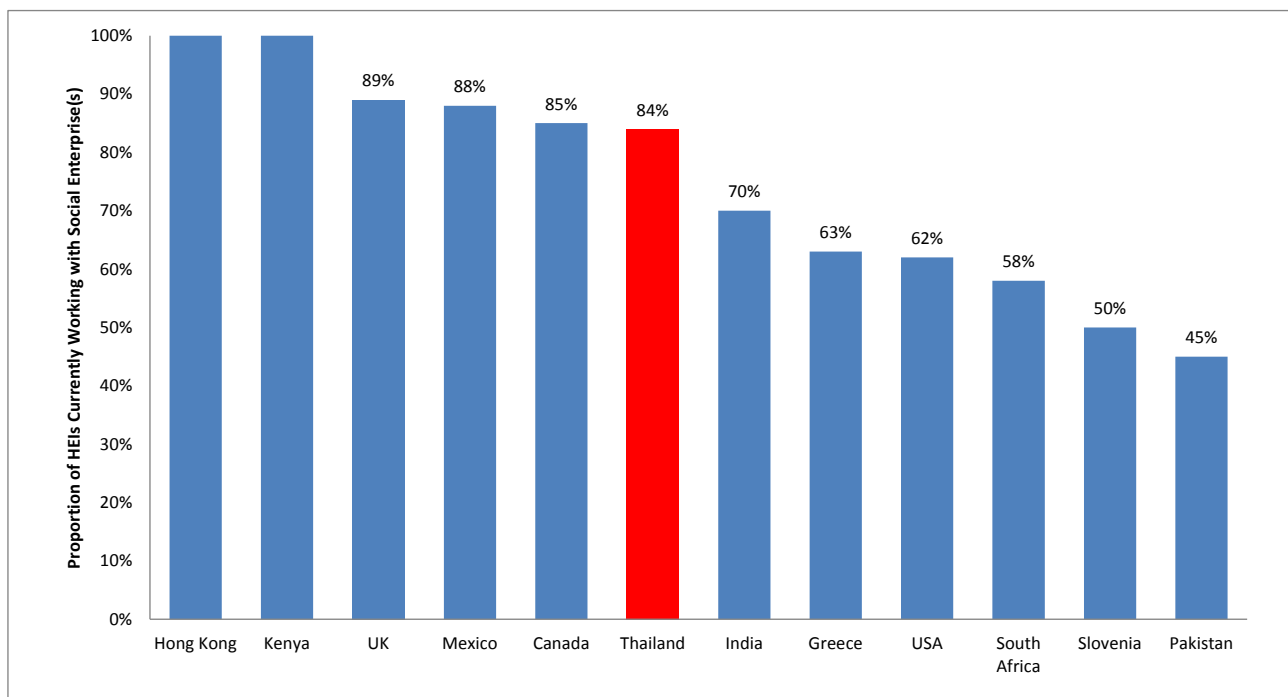
### Introduction

This section firstly summarises the scale and characteristics of HEI and SE partnerships in Thailand, followed by a review of priority areas, and discussion on the benefits and approaches to supporting social enterprise. Where appropriate, the analysis draws on findings from the eleven other countries of focus in order to provide a comparator position to Thailand (see 'Using this report').

### The scale of social enterprise activity

Reflecting the increasing role that HEIs in Thailand are playing in supporting the SE sector, social enterprise activity amongst Thai HEIs was found to be commonplace. As illustrated in Chart 1, of the 61 responding institutions, 51 (84%) were found to have active partnerships at the time of the survey. Notably, of the ten remaining HEIs, eight (13%) stated an intention to work with social enterprise in the future; and 2 (3%) said they had previously worked with SE. Thus, all responding Thai institutions had some form of history or intention to work with SE; which is notable given the large number of HEIs that responded.

**Chart 1: Proportion of institutions from each country currently working with social enterprises**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016  
Base: 205

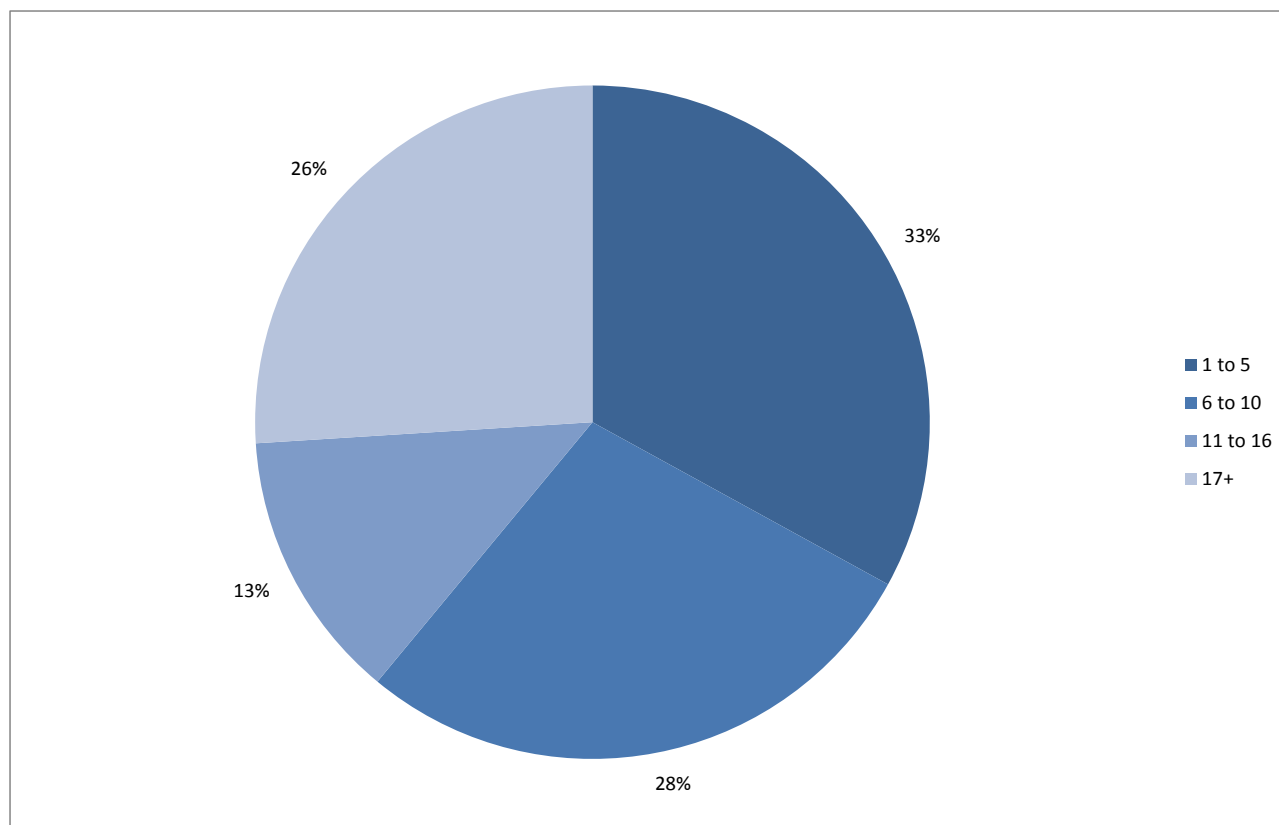
Analysis revealed no obvious trend with regard to the number of active partnerships across responding HEIs. As indicated in Chart 2, 33% (13) of HEIs that were working with a social enterprise at the point of the survey engaged with between one and five, whilst 28% (11) had between six and ten. In contrast, 13% (5) engaged with between eleven and sixteen, whilst a further 26% (10) had seventeen or more active partnerships.

As with the findings from the global research report, and as illustrated in Chart 2, the number of active social enterprise partnerships that HEIs in Thailand reported they have was found to be



diverse, and do not represent one homogenous group. However taking into account the size of a social enterprise could go some way toward accounting for these differences. For example, in the global research report, one university was found to have between one and five active partnerships; but one of these was with an umbrella organisation which is home to several large scale social enterprises.

**Chart 2: Number of active social enterprise partnerships per UK institution**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 39

### International activity

In terms of the geographical scope of engagement, of the 52 Thai institutions with either an active or previous partnership(s) at the time of the survey, 79% (41) stated that this included a partnership within their own country. Further, over half (52% / 27) stated that their partnerships also involved international activity, such as being part of an international network; collaborating with SEs or HEIs working with social enterprises operating in other countries; and attending international conferences. This is in line with the evidence described in *'The landscape for social enterprise'*, in which it was noted that Thai institutions are commonly undertaking international SE collaborations, such as with 'WeDu', an enterprise empowering disadvantaged young women across Asia.

*“We have developed a network with other foreign education institutes working in the field of social enterprise”*

*“A good example of our international work is our partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. They offer disaster relief, provide economic opportunity and deal with hunger and nutrition issues in Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Laos”*

*“Recently we participated in 'Singapore Learning Express' with students from Singapore Polytechnic to improve community business using design thinking”*

*“We have attended the ICIS International Academic Conference where we shared experiences relating to social enterprise activities”*

Regarding the scale of this international activity, 63% (17) of HEIs that had international SE partnerships stated that this amounted to between one and five projects. This compares with 22% (6) that worked with between six and ten projects, 4% (1) that worked with between eleven and sixteen, and 7% (2) who specified that they were involved seventeen or more international activities. One HEI (4%) was unsure how many international activities they participated in.

As a proportion of total work with social enterprise, the largest majority of HEIs from this group (37/10) stated that international partnerships accounted for between one and ten per cent of their social enterprise engagement and activity. A further three (11%) stated that international activity accounted for between twenty to thirty per cent; four (15%) specified that it accounted for between forty and fifty percent; and two reported that international activity accounted for around 80% of their total work with social enterprises. The remaining eight HEIs (30%) were unable to attribute a proportion.

For those HEIs that had previously been, or are currently engaged in an international partnership, key motivations included the opportunity to: address identified international needs; build networks; gain additional exposure; and expand knowledge share opportunities.

*“We are motivated to participate in social development programmes to better society, locally, nationally and internationally”*

*“Internationally, our focus is to build collaborative networks focused on business and social enterprise, among other organisations”*

*“We were motivated to support the university's vision of becoming a 'globally recognised university”*

*“Many countries share the same interest in social enterprise. Therefore, they should work in collaboration in order to improve quality of life for people”*

Notwithstanding the prevalence of international activity in Thailand, a number of challenges were faced by institutions in brokering and supporting these partnerships. A total of seventeen institutions highlighted areas in which they had experienced barriers to working internationally.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, access to funding and financial support were frequently cited as challenges to international working, both in terms of supporting social enterprise activity and

funding logistical aspects of the partnership. Another commonly cited challenge focused on the cultural differences that exist when working internationally, for example different cultural contexts and language barriers that create communication issues.

*“The main challenges we have faced in developing international partnerships have been cultural and financial. Getting to grips with different languages and cultures takes time, while securing financial support is always challenging”*

*“Having a limited budget, language barriers, and tight timescales when problems arise that need to be urgently addressed can all present challenges”*

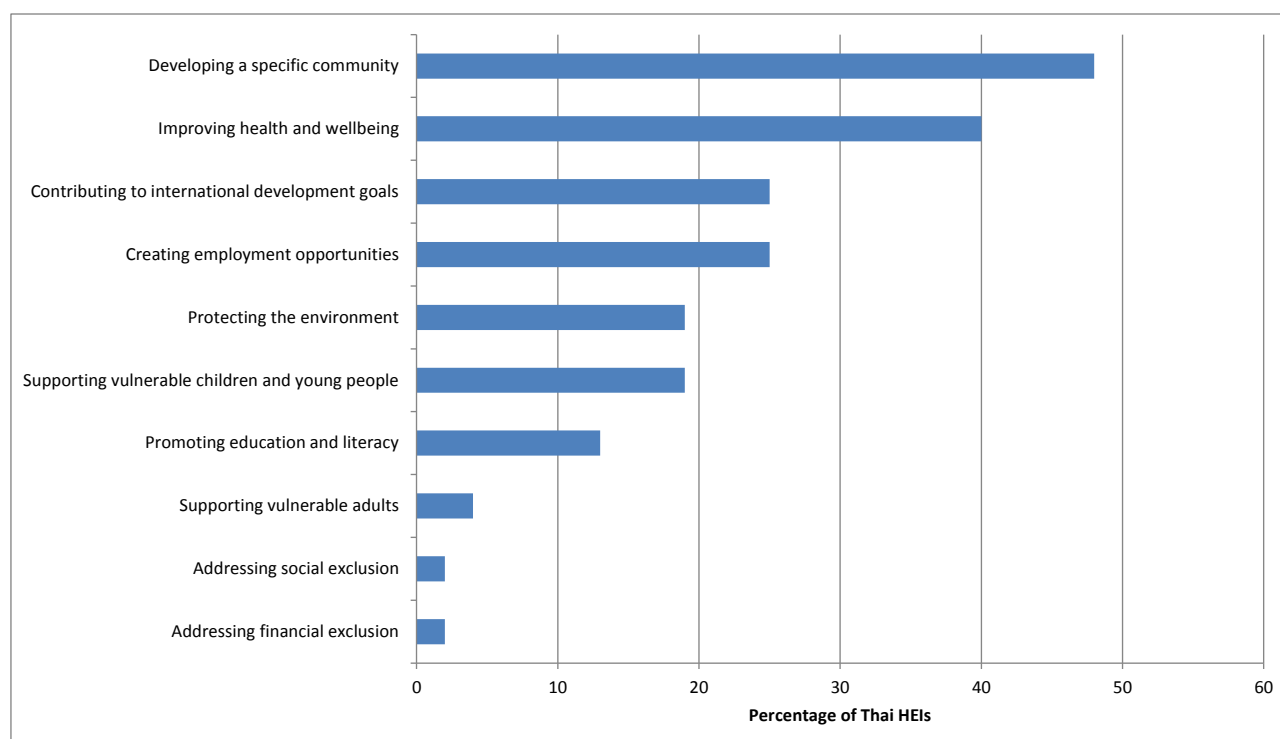
*“Differences in culture, beliefs, traditions and languages”*

*“It is sometimes difficult to source funds for the trip to attend events and activities”*

### Priority areas

Partially reflecting the findings from the global report, the most commonly cited social purposes that Thai HEIs would be most likely to support<sup>4</sup> were the development of specific communities (48% / 25); the improvement of health and wellbeing (40% / 21); the creation of employment opportunities (25% / 13); and contributions to international goals (25%/ 13). As shown in Chart 3, protecting the environment, and supporting children and young people were also deemed to be important social purposes, both cited by 19% (10) of Thai HEIs.

**Chart 3: Types of social enterprise Thai HEIs would be most likely to support**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 52

<sup>4</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second choice of purpose they would be most likely to support.

## Motivations for engagement

Thai institutions identified a range of motivating factors that underpinned their engagement with social enterprises and these mirrored findings from the global research report. Of the institutions providing a valid response, the majority (77% / 40) indicated that they were particularly motivated<sup>5</sup> to engage with social enterprise if it was part of their HEI mission or strategy. This was followed by a motivation to both address local and regional needs (35%/ 18) and improve the student experience (31%/ 16). Other commonly cited motivations included the desire to develop research opportunities; address national needs; and include SE as part of the curriculum on some of the HEIs' courses, each of which were cited by 13% (7) of Thai HEIs. As noted in 'Case study 1', some institutions are embedding the concept of social enterprise in the academic curriculum in order to create opportunities for local, collaborative, educational programmes that exist to benefit both local communities and the institutions' students.

*“Through working with social enterprise, the HEI will achieve its goal in terms of being an institution that works to better society”*

*“Partnership working has enabled our HEI to develop and promote better quality of life for people and solve social problems within communities”*

*“Students are practicing outside their boxes when they work with social enterprises; it expands their expertise, and creates social mind-sets”*

## Working with and supporting social enterprise

Thai HEIs that were found to be currently working with a social enterprise(s) were asked to indicate the ways in which this took place, and to exemplify the associated type of support they provide.

As shown in Table 1, (and in common with the findings from the global report), by far the most commonly cited approach was through a project, partnership, or joint activity – identified by 47 responding Thai institutions (100%). This was exemplified by the provision of: collaboration or research opportunities (46); access to facilities (45); training (44); placement students (44), and expertise (43).

The second most commonly cited support approach was through institutional commitment to working with and supporting social enterprises in the HEI's mission or strategy – cited by 92% (44) of Thai institutions. The facilitation of student-led and HEI- or staff-led social enterprises was also prevalent amongst Thai institutions, cited as a support approach by 87% (41) and 83% (39) respectively. Notably, in comparison to global findings, HEIs in Thailand were more likely to report having institutional membership of a social enterprise network (80%/ 37) than HEIs globally (70%).

<sup>5</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second most motivating factor.

**Table 1: Approaches to working with social enterprise**

Approach	Percentage	
	Thailand	Global
A project, partnership or other joint activity with one or more social enterprise(s)	100%	96%
Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy	92%	81%
Student led social enterprises	87%	78%
HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises	83%	67%
Institutional membership of a social enterprise network	80%	70%
Incubation space/ facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop	66%	68%

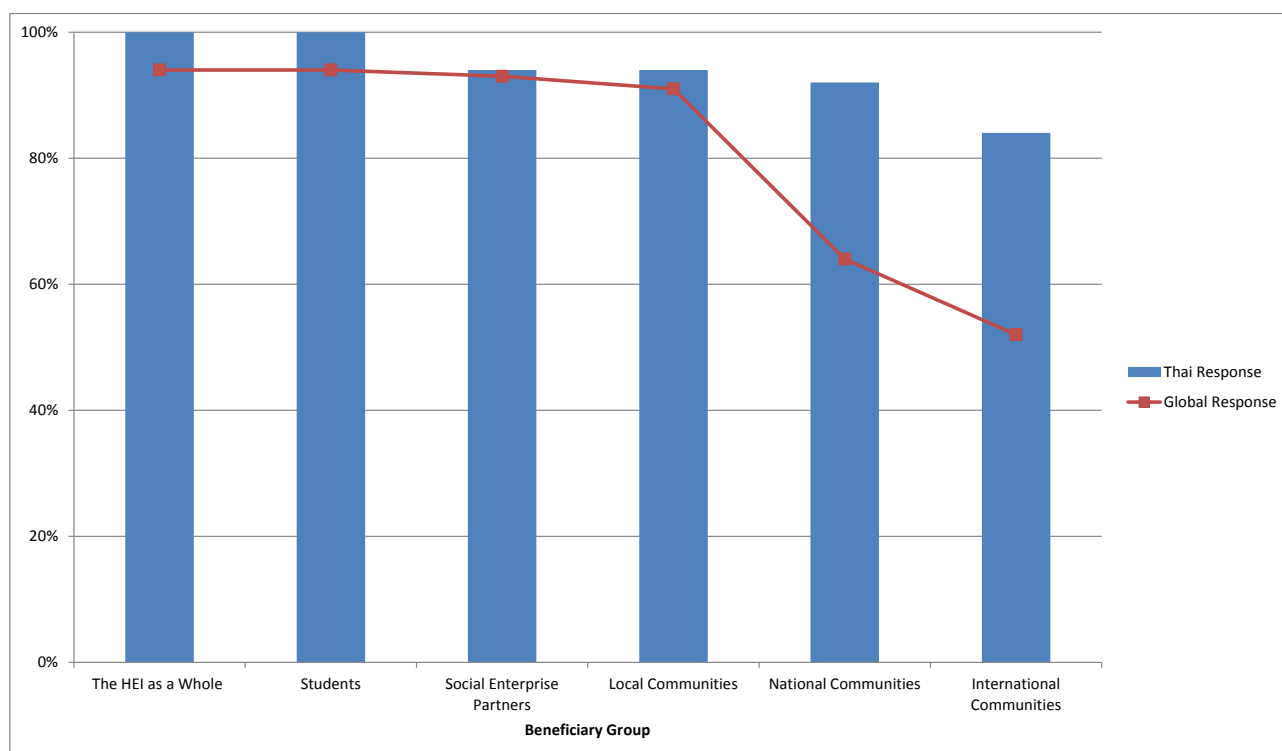
Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 48 except 'A project, partnership or other joint activity with one or more social enterprise(s)', 'Student led social enterprises', 'HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises', and 'Incubation space/ facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop' where B=47, and 'Institutional membership of a social enterprise network' where B=46

### Benefits of partnership working

Thai HEIs identified that their work with social enterprise(s) had created benefits for a range of groups. This is presented in Chart 4, and benchmarked against findings from the global research report, indicated by the red trend line.

Views on the beneficiaries of partnership working partially echoed the global findings. Both the HEI as a whole, and students, were commonly identified as the primary beneficiaries by 100% (52) of those providing a valid response, compared to 94% for both globally. Social enterprise partners and local communities were also considered key beneficiaries, both in Thailand (94%/ 49 each), and globally (93% and 91% respectively). National communities were cited as beneficiaries of HEI/SE partnerships by 92% (48) of Thai HEIs, which far exceeded the global response of 64%. Similarly, international communities were more likely to be reported as beneficiaries by Thai institutions (84%/ 43) than HEIs globally (52%). As noted in *'The landscape for social enterprise'*, Thailand has created a strong ecosystem for SE to thrive in; and HEIs are a part of this; engaging in various local, national and international partnerships. Thus the finding that Thai institutions perceive that a range of beneficiaries profit from their work is in line with the wide remit of work they undertake.

**Chart 4: Thai views regarding the key beneficiaries of HEI/SE partnership**

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Thailand Base: 52 except 'International Communities' where B=51

Global Base: 157, except 'Social Enterprise Partners' where B=156; 'Students' and 'Local Communities' where B=155; and 'National Communities' and 'International Communities' where B=148

### Embedding social enterprise in higher education

Echoing findings from the eleven other participating countries, 87% (41) of Thai HEIs providing a valid response commonly used social enterprise in the delivery of extracurricular activities such as being a mentor or a judge in a business competition, compared to 86% globally. Notably, a further 89% (41)<sup>6</sup> indicated that they involved social enterprise in the delivery of their curriculum teaching, which was considerably higher than the global average of 67%. A total of twenty-six Thai institutions (57%) also reported incorporating SE across all courses, again surpassing the 30% globally. Furthermore, similar to the global response of 42%, a total of twenty-one institutions (43%) in Thailand offered an accredited social enterprise course.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages may vary due to differing base numbers.

## Good practice in developing partnerships

### Introduction

As noted previously, the research sought, in part, to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange, and to inform further collaboration opportunities (see *'Using this report'*). In support of these objectives, the survey asked HEIs to share examples of good practice stemming from their experience of developing partnerships with social enterprises.

HEIs in Thailand provided a range of good practice approaches that could be shared more widely, which were broadly categorised as follows: focus on impact and sustainability; communication and knowledge exchange; and student involvement. These are discussed in turn, and exemplified by quotes from responding institutions.

### Focus on impact and sustainability

Thai HEIs underlined the value of approaching partnerships in a systematic, needs-based, and organised way; implementing clear action plans, and establishing monitoring and evaluation frameworks to underpin their social enterprise partnerships. They also highlighted the importance of embedding social enterprise within HEIs, ideally through a dedicated team to help oversee activity and ensure consistency.

*"Conduct a needs assessment, have a clear action plan, and frequently hold follow up meetings. This will lead to having a better picture regarding the progress of the project as well being able to foresee possible problems"*

*"Have a clear action plan and make sure to assess and monitor work continuously"*

*"Planning based on clear purpose and goals is an important first step, followed by establishing guidelines and roles for the partnership. Once at the implementation stage, regular checks to monitor performance in each step of the plan will help overcome challenges"*

*"Always aim to establish a committee within the HEI that is dedicated to working on social programs in order to consistently promote activities and projects. Moreover, validation of the outcomes should be done both internally and externally"*

### Communication and knowledge exchange

Reflecting the global findings, HEIs in Thailand highlighted the significance of clear communication and openness in sharing knowledge between social enterprise partners. Implementing clear communication channels and building regular updates into action plans was perceived to help mitigate potential challenges faced by the partnership.

*"It is important to openly share and review experiences together"*

*"You should avoid communication errors by ensuring the assignment is clear and all parties understand the processes involved – the goal is to be on the same page"*

## Student Involvement

Thai HEIs emphasised the importance of involving students in partnerships, and the associated mutual benefits for both students, and the social enterprise partners. In common with the global findings, there are a number of ways for students to get involved in partnership activity, for example, entering social enterprise business challenges or competitions; making use of an SE incubator; or taking part in student placements. Therefore, establishing ways to utilise student resources was felt to be an important step for any HEI embarking on new partnerships with the social enterprise sector.

*“One example of good practice is how we have utilised students. We have allowed them to get involved at various stages and take responsibility for activities in order to let them have a good learning experience”*

*“It is important to use student power to help run social activities; students are a great and accessible resource”*



## Summary

In Thailand, the social enterprise sector is well established and there is a strong ecosystem of support developing throughout the country. HEIs are a key source of this support, providing various resources to develop and strengthen social enterprise as a tool to enhance society, both in Thailand and overseas. In this context it is perhaps unsurprising that HEIs' involvement with social enterprise in Thailand was commonplace, with 84% of respondents indicating an active partnership at the time of the survey. This is benchmarked against a 75% level of engagement from across all twelve countries of study.

Regarding the geographical scope of social enterprise engagement in Thailand, 79% with either active or previous partnerships stated that this included a partnership within their own country, whilst over half (52%) indicated that their partnership(s) also involved some element of international activity, such as being part of an international network; collaborating with internationally based social enterprises; and attending international conferences. Underpinning this engagement, and mirroring global findings, was a motivation to work with social enterprise if doing so was part of the HEI's mission or strategy; to address local and regional needs; and improve the student experience.

In line with the desire to address local or regional needs, and in common with the findings from the global report, the most commonly cited social purposes that Thai HEIs would be most likely to support were those developing specific communities; improving health and wellbeing; and creating employment opportunities.

The research indicated numerous ways in which Thai HEIs approach their work with social enterprise(s). By far the most commonly cited (100%) was through a project, partnership, or joint activity, such as the provision of collaboration and research opportunities; access to facilities; training; and placement students. This was followed by institutional commitment to working with and supporting social enterprise within the HEI's mission or strategy, identified by 92% of HEIs; and the facilitation of student- and HEI- or staff-led social enterprises, reported by 87% and 83% of Thai institutions. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that the HEI as a whole, and students, were identified by Thai HEIs to be the primary beneficiaries of partnership working, both cited by 100% (52) of responding institutions.

It is clear that HEIs in Thailand are providing a wide range of support in developing and promoting the social enterprise sector. Institutions were found to take various approaches in supporting SE including through projects and partnerships, and through facilitating student- and staff-led social enterprises. They also commonly involved social enterprise in the delivery of both the curriculum and extracurricular activities; embedding the concept across all courses to a greater extent than the global average. Looking forward, there now exists opportunities for Thai HEIs to further extend their work; for example by taking a leading role in developing accredited social enterprise courses, cited by only 43% of Thai institutions; and providing more incubation facilities where new social enterprises can grow.

## Case studies

### Case study 1: Udon Thani Rajabhat University

#### Institution overview:

Founded in 1923, Udon Thani Rajabhat University (UDRU) is a university based in the Northeast region of Thailand. The university is committed to using international and local knowledge to empower the community; from its origins as a teacher education institute, UDRU maintains its specialisation in pedagogy. There are currently more than 22,000 students enrolled.

#### Approach to social enterprise:

In 2015, the UDRU/SE programme, 'Masters of Arts Social Entrepreneurship', was initiated to create local, collaborative, educational programme-facilitating opportunities for the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the upper Northeast Region of Thailand. The aim is to inspire creative platforms with local practitioners, business partners and educators in order to create pilot activities for community-based enterprises.

#### The UDRU/SE programme:

This is a partnership programme with local communities, regional micro-finance workgroups, and national social business incubators such as ISMED (Institute for Small and Medium Enterprises). The primary purpose is to challenge the SE ecosystem, strengthen practices of the SE curriculum and practices at UDRU, and develop alternative shared resources across communities and local stakeholders.

UDRU/SE is focused primarily on local, community-based SE as well as opening its doors to challenging new experiences to work side by side with social entrepreneurs; encouraging a collaborative SE environment. As its first step, UDRU/SE is committed to the fundamental principle of generating SE in action. UDRU/SE has particularly focused on exploring interdisciplinary curricula with active collaborative engagement with social enterprises such as the 'Ma:D Club for Better Society' and Klongdinsor in Bangkok. The programme has recently started a project-based internship programme with local business partners and microfinance initiatives such as the Village Fund.

#### Collaborative projects:

In 2016, the UDRU/SE programme initiated a collaboration with Klongdinsor, a social enterprise providing opportunities for people with special needs. Together they created the 'run2gether' project, which was based on the concept of providing opportunities for people with disabilities to exercise with friends in pairs. In this way, this project has facilitated greater understanding between those with disabilities and those without; as well as providing engaging, social activities for those less able.

In parallel, the Social Enterprise Esan Forum, the first SE forum in the Northeast Region, has been created to focus on developing an incubation platform, both on and off campus, aimed towards empowering social entrepreneurs and business partners in community-based enterprises. These initiatives focus on creating a positive impact in society, particularly local communities, which is one of the mandates of UDRU/SE.

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## Case study 2: Maejo University

### Institution overview:

Founded in 1934 as the Northern Agricultural Teachers' Training School, and located in Chiang Mai province, Maejo University is the oldest agricultural institution in Thailand. Since gaining public university status in 1996, the institution specialises in several subjects: agriculture, zoology, fishing, engineering and science. There are currently more than 20,000 students enrolled, and part of Maejo University's mission statement focuses on the aim to produce graduates who have the knowledge, academic and vocational capabilities to withstand changes, by emphasising agriculture, applied science and other related fields of study based on the needs of the society and the labour market.

### Approach to social enterprise:

Maejo University specialises in social enterprises which protect the environment and focus on improving health and wellbeing. The social enterprises all have a broad aim to address international development goals. Maejo University has a comprehensive approach to working in collaboration with social enterprises. It is a member of a social enterprise network, has an incubation space, and supports students and staff led social enterprises.

The University's approach is to incorporate social enterprise across all courses. For the enterprises themselves, Maejo University provides funding, expertise, access to their facilities, training, student placements, and collaboration on research. Lastly, Maejo University uses its own purchasing power to buy and promote products or services derived from the social enterprises they support.

### Collaborating with social enterprise:

The Sukha House is a social enterprise which sells organic and natural health products such as brown rice, sugar, honey, cereal and snacks from Thailand. They aim to be a leading social enterprise in the region. They collaborate with Maejo University's Institute of Product Quality and Standardization (IQS) on the 'Organic Rice Farming Project' in which the university provides comprehensive support for farmers to cultivate organic produce. First of all, farmers receive training in organic production principles and practice, delivered by the university in the form of seminars and training sessions. IQS staff check the quality of farmers' cultivated land and water source, and the farmers then follow IQS instructions before, during and after their organic rice production. After harvesting, the rice is checked for quality control and the whole process is supervised closely by IQS staff. Adhering to their principles of fairtrade, the university then buy back the harvested rice from the farmers at a price above the market rate.

### Challenges of international activity:

Maejo University has been keen to develop international partnerships to expand its social enterprise activity as it provides opportunities to both establish new connections with industry partners, and collaborate with business owners. However the university has encountered a number of challenges when engaging in international social enterprise activity, including difficulties in the areas of finance and access to funding; differences in religion, cultural beliefs and traditions; and language barriers, which have led to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

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