

Technology in Asia's Social Sector: Cross-Regional Insights for Philanthropy in Asia and Europe¹

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Abstract

Digital technology is reshaping the social sector globally. Yet, the *Doing Good Index* 2024,² published by the Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society (CAPS), reveals gaps in the technological readiness of Asia's social sector. These gaps include insufficient hardware and software access, inadequate cybersecurity measures, and a lack of staff capacity, hindering effective and safe technology adoption for social service delivery. As Asia rapidly advances in technological innovation and usage, Europe's social sector also sees a similar upward trend with stronger digital infrastructure and regulatory frameworks. Faced with shared challenges that hinder the further leverage of digital technology, the social sectors in Asia and Europe can benefit from cross-regional learning. Drawing on primary data from the *Doing Good Index* 2024 and secondary analysis, this article adopts a comparative approach to examine technology usage and readiness levels in Asia's social sector while also drawing from insights from the European counterpart. It also maps key stakeholders in the philanthropic ecosystem as well as their roles and characteristics in addressing the social sector's technological needs. By filling the knowledge gap between Asia and Europe in this field, the article aims to enhance philanthropy's role in empowering the social sector with more effective and strategic technology adoption.

Keywords: social sector, technology usage, technological readiness, philanthropic ecosystem

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² The *Doing Good Index* is biennial study, published since 2018, that examines the regulatory and societal environment that influences private capital to do good in 17 Asian economies. It comprises four sub-indexes: Regulations, Tax and Fiscal Policy, Ecosystem, and Procurement, and groups economies into four clusters: Doing Well, Doing Better, Doing Okay, and Not Doing Enough. Separate surveys were designed for the social sector experts and Social Delivery Organizations (SDOs). The two surveys capture different perspectives of the social sector and are designed to complement each other. (CAPS, 2024a)

1. Introduction

Digital technology has been developing rapidly in the past two decades, especially in the Asia Pacific region. In 2022, the percentage of population using the internet in East Asia and the Pacific reached 72% (World Bank, 2024). The expected smartphone adoption in the region is expected to exceed the global average of 92% in 2030 (Asian Development Bank, 2023). Despite gaps in development statuses across regions and countries, technology has been widely adopted in various forms, enabling greater connectivity and the flow of information and resources.

The social sector has benefited from adopting technology, leveraging digital tools and platforms to increase effectiveness, supercharge fundraising efforts, and expand access to social services. In Asia, 95% of Social Delivery Organizations (SDOs)³ surveyed reported using technology to deliver services to beneficiaries in 2024 (CAPS, 2024a). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, with digital technology becoming an essential tool for staying informed and connected (Lee et al., 2021). Technology holds considerable transformative potential for enhancing the effectiveness of nonprofits and advancing their social missions (Boles, 2013; McNutt et al., 2018; Bobsin et al., 2019). Recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) present additional opportunities to improve social service delivery and expand access to resources through more tailored engagement with stakeholders (Coen, 2023; Pasic, 2023). However, many organizations in the social sector face persistent barriers to technology adoption. These challenges are particularly pronounced in less developed economies, which are unable to fully realize the potential benefits of digital innovation (Ejiaku, 2014). An enabling environment is therefore essential to accelerate technology adoption among social organizations. Particularly, philanthropy holds significant potential to address resource and capacity constraints faced by SDOs in using technology more effectively.

Current debates on philanthropy and technology remain largely shaped by the Global North (Hewage, 2024), where major corporations and donors decide social priorities and funding flows. However, philanthropy in Asia diverges from Western models in its giving traditions, economic conditions, and social dynamics. Understanding this landscape will be more important than before in the current geopolitical and economic shifts. A comparative analysis of social sectors between Asia and Europe, particularly in terms of technology adoption and the role of philanthropy, can help illustrate these contextual differences and contribute to more inclusive philanthropic approaches.

This article adopts a comparative, cross-regional lens to examine technology adoption in Asia's social sector, the challenges faced, and the role of philanthropy in addressing them. Additionally, it examines the philanthropic ecosystem that supports technology adoption in

³ Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society (CAPS) uses the term Social Delivery Organizations (SDOs) to refer to organizations engaged in delivering products and services that address a societal need. The commonly used term "nonprofits" is less useful because many organizations include a for-profit or social enterprise income stream. "Non-governmental organization" (NGO) is also not quite right in Asia, as many such organizations have government affiliations. The term "SDO" allows us to differentiate social delivery from pure advocacy organizations that take on a different role within the Asian context. It covers a range of organizations, including traditional nonprofits, nonprofits with income streams, social enterprises and philanthropic foundations. (CAPS, 2024a)

³ The 17 economies are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Vietnam

Asia's social sector through stakeholder mapping. To promote cross-regional learning, these findings are considered comprehensively alongside insights from the European counterpart.

2. Technology Usage in Asia's Social Sector

2.1. Data source

The analysis of technology usage in Asia's social sector draws on primary data from 2,183 SDOs and interviews with 140 experts across 17 economies,⁴ collected through CAPS' *Doing Good Index* 2024 survey. This biennial study examines the regulatory and societal environments that influence the flow of private resources for social good in Asia. The survey is structured around 35 indicators across four subindexes: regulations, tax and fiscal Policy, ecosystem, and government procurement. Each iteration of the *Doing Good Index* examines a thematic trend affecting Asia's development and the social sector. The 2024 iteration focused on the influence of digital technology on the sector. Survey questions covered SDOs' access to the internet and digital tools, internal operations, social media presence, cybersecurity, challenges SDOs face, and their technological needs.

Data was collected between April and August 2023 through an online platform in collaboration with partner organizations in each economy. Of the surveyed SDOs, 89% are nonprofits, 7% are nonprofit social enterprises or social ventures, and 4% are for-profit social enterprises or social ventures. Data about the European social sector is drawn from existing literature and secondary resources.

2.2. Technology Usage

2.2.1. Internal operations

Asian SDOs increasingly integrate digital tools into their daily operations and administrative processes. According to the *Doing Good Index* 2024, 97% of surveyed organizations use basic software such as Microsoft Office and Google Workspace. Many also rely on digital tools for information management. For example, 80% collect financial records digitally, and 87% store these records in digital formats. Over three-quarters of SDOs store donor information digitally, while 80% maintain digital records of clients and beneficiaries. However, adoption of more specialized tools remains uneven. Only around half of SDOs reported using operational software, such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems and accounting software. Only 35% use more advanced digital tools, such as video editing and statistical analysis packages.

Longitudinally, technology adoption in internal operations has been increasing among SDOs, with 67% reporting increased technology use over the past two years. Thailand shows the highest growth, with over 95% of SDOs reporting greater reliance on digital tools. By comparison, a 2023 survey of 671 European charities found that 40% increased their usage of digital channels internally (European Fundraising Association et al., 2024). While not directly

⁴ The 17 economies are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Vietnam

comparable, this suggests that Asian SDOs may be adopting digital tools at a faster pace than their European counterparts currently.

2.2.2. Service delivery

Digital technology also enhances the provision of social goods and services, especially in underserved areas with limited public resources. In Asia, 95% of surveyed SDOs reported using technology in service delivery. The most commonly used channels are via telephone (69%), instant messaging (63%), and video calls (57%). Approximately half (52%) host online events, webinars, or training sessions. Nonetheless, most organizations rely on relatively basic digital tools, highlighting the potential for greater adoption of more advanced and customized technologies. For example, only 27% of SDOs disburse payments or grants digitally, despite the region's leading position in digital payments (Deloitte, 2024a). This gap may reflect limited infrastructure or inadequate sectoral support for technology transfer.

Among other more advanced tools, custom smartphone applications can be efficient for more targeted service delivery. For example, one nonprofit organization in Thailand, Starfish Education, developed an online learning platform designed to address gaps in the public education system. However, this approach is also underutilized in Asia's social sector, with just 21% of SDOs utilizing it for service delivery. Adoption is especially low in Japan, Korea, and Chinese Taipei (all under 10%), three of the more developed economies in Asia. Interestingly, 51% of SDOs in Vietnam reported using applications to deliver service, the highest across Asia. In more recent years, some SDOs have begun experimenting with AI. During the 2024 Henan floods in China, for example, the Shenzhen One Foundation deployed its Disaster Response AI Brain to generate a material allocation plan within two hours (Kuang, 2025). At the same time, 5% of Asian SDOs report not using any form of digital technology in their service delivery.

Longitudinally, 56% have increased their online services in the past two years, with the highest figures in Thailand (67%) and Sri Lanka (64%). Rising geopolitical, economic, and climate pressures have intensified demand. In Asia, 60% of SDOs reported a rise in demand for their products and services over the past year. This trend suggests that greater reliance on digital tools for service delivery is likely to continue.

In Europe, a 2023 survey found that one-third (33%) of nonprofits had experienced increased service demand, while 25% expressed intention to deliver services in new ways (European Fundraising Association et al., 2024). For the European social sector, scaling up technology adoption can represent a critical strategy for meeting evolving needs, which are becoming increasingly complex.

2.2.3. Communications and outreach

Digital technology allows SDOs to raise awareness about their work and engage with stakeholders more effectively. Social media is the most widely used communication and marketing strategy in Asia's social sector, with 73% of surveyed SDOs listing it as one of the most important marketing outlets. Chinese Mainland leads at 89%. Across Asia, over 90% of

surveyed SDOs have social media profiles, while fewer (78%) have websites. Social media usage has increased over the past two years, with 72% of SDOs reporting an uptick in social media usage to promote their work. Facebook is the most popular platform, especially in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, followed by Instagram and YouTube. In Chinese Mainland, most organizations are WeChat users (95%). A quarter of SDOs listed enhancing social media presence as one of their top needs.

Similarly, European nonprofits see websites and social media as the two most effective communication and fundraising tools, representing 87% and 85% of surveyed nonprofits, respectively (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2019). However, the two regions have slightly different priorities for their digital presence. The proportion of nonprofits with a website in Europe reaches 95%, significantly higher than in Asia, and there is more regular engagement with stakeholders via social media (95%). In addition, 44% of nonprofits in Europe had a written social media strategy, and 27% tracked return on investment (ROI) for campaigns, practices less common in Asia (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2019). European nonprofit organizations also exceed the global average for investing in advertising, with 42% of nonprofits in Europe purchasing Google Ads. These differences highlight opportunities for Asian SDOs to adopt more strategic approaches to social media engagement as they expand their social media presence.

2.2.4. *Fundraising*

SDOs in Asia and beyond are increasingly leveraging digital technologies to expand their funding base. The *Doing Good Index* 2024 data shows that 35% of Asian SDOs increased their online fundraising activities over the past two years. The most commonly used tools are organizational websites (54%), social media channels (52%), and direct email campaigns (44%). Additionally, 29% of SDOs raise funds through third-party online platforms, particularly in Singapore and Chinese Mainland, where 55% and 49% of SDOs, respectively, do so. Digital payment systems are also integral to charitable giving. In Hong Kong, for example, the mobile payment platform PayMe recorded a 430% increase in nongovernmental organization clients within two years (HSBC, 2022).

European nonprofits report similar trends, with 70% increasing their use of digital channels to reach and engage supporters. Notably, 14% now raise more money through digital channels than traditional channels (European Fundraising Association & Salesforce, 2023). Similar to Asia, social media (53%), websites (50%), and email (49%) are the primary fundraising tools in Europe (Salesforce, 2024). In Europe, web-based fundraising is most popular in Germany, with 82% of nonprofits citing it as their main fundraising channel (Lepper, 2021).

Compared to Europe, crowdfunding is gaining more traction in Asia, supported by the emergence of homegrown platforms in recent years. According to the *Doing Good Index* 2024, 27% of SDOs currently use crowdfunding, and 64% plan to adopt it in the future. In Chinese Mainland, 29 crowdfunding platforms have received government approval, collectively facilitating millions of dollars in donations annually (CAPS, 2024). Tech giant Tencent's public fundraising platform raised RMB 3.8 billion (approximately US\$530 million) during the 2023

99 Giving Day, involving 2700 charitable organizations (Tencent, 2024). In contrast, only 11% of nonprofits in Europe and other Western countries report using crowdfunding (Salesforce, 2024).

3. Technological readiness in Asia's social sector

3.1. Technological readiness framework

To harness technological advancements effectively, SDOs need adequate infrastructure, resources, and skills. To assess the sector's capacity in this regard, CAPS has adapted a framework (Figure 1) that examines three levels of technological readiness.⁵ Foundational readiness refers to the prerequisites for adopting new technologies, such as internet access, technological hardware and software. Operational readiness reflects the ability of SDOs to use digital tools effectively and safely. This includes in-house IT skills and expertise, cybersecurity measures, and necessary funding. Transformational readiness focuses on an SDO's capacity to maximize the long-term benefits of digital technologies, which depends on leadership commitment, staff support, and continued investment in digital technology (CAPS, 2024a).

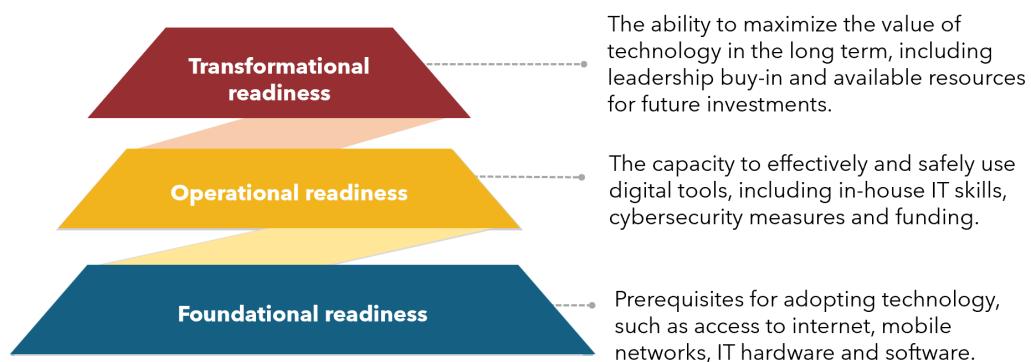


Figure 1. Technological Readiness Framework for the Social Sector.
Adapted from: CAPS, 2024a.

3.2. Foundational readiness

Digital infrastructure in Asia continues to face significant gaps, particularly in lower-income economies. While 84% of surveyed SDOs have sufficiently reliable internet access at their workplaces, this figure drops to 76% outside of home or office environments. In Bangladesh and Nepal, 22% of SDOs lack reliable internet access even at their offices. In contrast, 84% of the population in Europe and Central Asia uses the internet, compared to 72% in East Asia and the Pacific, and 45% in South Asia (World Bank, 2024). Access to hardware—such as computers, tablets, and other devices—also constrains foundational readiness. Less than 70% of SDOs say that their staff have adequate access to computers/tablets to meet organizational needs (Figure 2). In Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, and Nepal, only roughly half of SDOs consider their hardware resources to be insufficient. In fact, hardware is the most frequently cited digital technology need, identified by 38% of SDOs overall.

⁵ The framework is based on IBM's AI Readiness Framework, adapted to the needs of the social sector, as outlined by Hewage (2024).

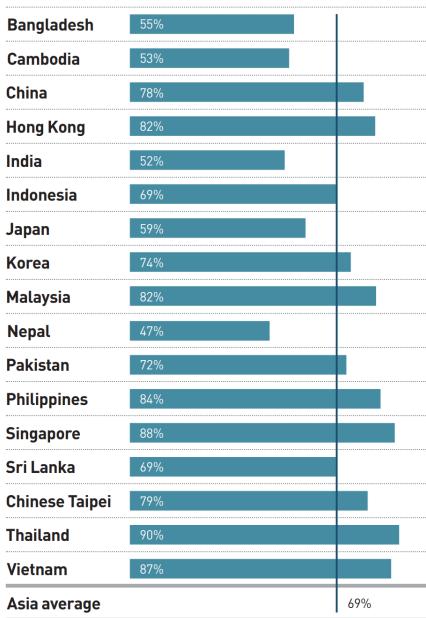


Figure 2: Percentage of SDOs with sufficient access to computers/tablets
Source: CAPS, 2024a

3.3. Operational readiness

While most SDOs use basic software, 31% and 27% of surveyed Asian SDOs listed operational and advanced software as pressing needs for digital adoption. Besides these IT resource needs, recruiting and retaining staff have also long been challenges for Asia's social sector, as shown in successive iterations of the *Doing Good Index*. The challenge intensifies as organizations prepare for the digital future. According to the 2024 Index, 59% of SDOs reported that their staff lack the skills required for digitization. It is the most frequently cited barrier in Cambodia (70%), Japan (70%), and the Philippines (62%).

Comparative data on workplace digital skills also underscores the gaps in staff capacity. In terms of digital skills readiness scores (Table 1), disparities across Asia are particularly stark, with India demonstrating relatively high preparedness and Japan lagging significantly behind (Salesforce, 2022a). The situation in Europe is not promising either, as the scores of several leading economies are generally lower than the global average. In addition, senior leadership in the European social sector tends to be more optimistic about their staff's digital skills than managers and individual contributors, suggesting a disconnect in perceptions of digital skills readiness (Salesforce, 2022b).

Table 1. Workplace Digital Skills Readiness in Leading Economies in Asia and Europe

Regions	Index Score	Very Prepared with Workplace Digital Skills	
		Now	In 5 years
Global	33	40%	34%
United States	36	44%	38%
Asian economies	India	63	76%
			58%

	Japan	15	21%	13%
	South Korea	17	14%	12%
	Singapore	35	36%	34%
European economies	Germany	25	39%	28%
	United Kingdom	21	30%	20%
	France	22	27%	20%
	Italy	25	23%	16%

Source: *Workplace Digital Skills Readiness (Salesforce, 2022a)*

Regarding safety, the adoption of digital technology introduces heightened exposure to cyber risks for the social sector. The Asia-Pacific region is among the most vulnerable globally. In 2024, the region accounted for 34% of all cyber incidents investigated worldwide (Raj, 2025). While most cyberattacks target governments and for-profit companies, SDOs' limited IT capacity and inadequate security measures leave them more vulnerable (Positive Technologies, 2023).

Although most surveyed Asian SDOs have not experienced any cyberattacks in the past two years, the risk remains high. This is reflected in the figure, which shows that 70% of organizations lack or are unaware of a cybersecurity or cyber-resilience strategy. While 63% have invested in basic tools such as antivirus or malware protection, fewer have invested in preventive measures, such as staff training (29%) or partnerships with external cybersecurity providers (15%).

By contrast, a 2024 survey of nonprofits in Europe, the United States and Australia, found that 34% provide cybersecurity training for all staff, 35% maintain formal data handling policies, and 24% have breach response plans (Salesforce, 2024). As of 2019, 40% of surveyed European nonprofits were already using encryption technology to protect data, reflecting the impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a European Union regulation on information privacy in the European economies (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2019). Europe, therefore, appears to be comparatively better prepared for cyber risks than Asia. However, both regions have room to strengthen their resilience if they are to fully embrace emerging technologies, such as AI, securely.

3.4. Transformational readiness

Organizational digital transformation has become pivotal in an era of rapid technological advancement (Omol, 2024). Strategic integration of technology can enhance mission-related outcomes and improve overall performance (Hackler & Saxton, 2007). Evidence suggests a strong correlation between digital maturity and organizational effectiveness, with digitally mature nonprofits consistently outperforming their peers (Salesforce, 2022c).

A critical enabler of digital transformation for the social sector is access to operational funding, which provides stability and flexibility to make long-term and strategic investments in digital capacity. Yet only just over half (52%) of Asian SDOs reported having received donor support for technology and IT-related expenses. Support is highest in Cambodia (76%), Sri Lanka (75%), and Bangladesh (73%), where foreign funding is more prevalent. By contrast,

fewer than 40% of SDOs in Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Chinese Mainland reported receiving such funding. More broadly, over 80% of Asian SDOs reported difficulty in obtaining unrestricted funding, a constraint that limits their ability to invest strategically in digital technology. Despite these financial barriers, organizational leadership and staff in Asia generally show strong support for digital adoption. Only 6% of Asian SDOs cite leadership reluctance as a barrier, and only 12% cite staff reluctance (CAPS, 2024a). This suggests broad internal buy-in in the sector for technological change.

In the West, three-quarters (76%) of surveyed nonprofits report that employees recognize technology as a critical part of organizational success (Salesforce, 2022c). They are similarly proactive in exploring emerging technologies: nonprofits cite training, board buy-in and investment in system integration and security as essential prerequisites for AI adoption (European Fundraising Association et. al., 2024). Compared to Asia, European nonprofits often adopt a more strategic approach, seeking external expertise and purchasing services from professional providers (Štremfelj & Valič, 2023). Nonetheless, European experts highlight insufficient strategic planning among senior leaders when it comes to AI and big data (Štremfelj & Valič, 2023).

In summary, while the European social sector currently benefits from stronger resources and awareness of technology investments, both Asia and Europe remain in the early stages of adopting advanced technologies. Across regions, broad staff and leadership support is prevalent. However, greater strategic planning, investment, and donor flexibility will be critical to realizing the transformational potential of digital technology in the social sector.

4. The Role of Philanthropy in Enhancing Social Sector's Technological Readiness

4.1. Role of philanthropy in addressing challenges faced by SDOs

In Asia, most SDOs demonstrate basic foundational and operational readiness. However, many lack the necessary resources and capacity to adopt advanced technologies and safeguard themselves against the risks associated with digital use. Long-term planning and sustained investments are also needed to prepare the sector for a digital future.

According to the *Doing Good Index* 2024, the most frequently cited barriers to technology adoption among Asian SDOs are insufficient funding (71%), inadequate staff skills (59%), and a lack of awareness of digital technology and tools (46%). Talent shortage in the social sector compounds these challenges. Almost three-quarters (71%) believe it is difficult to recruit staff, and 70% reported difficulty retaining staff. SDOs also face limited resources for staff upskilling, with only 16% receiving regular support for capacity building from donors. Similar constraints exist in many Western countries, as 62% of nonprofits face staffing-related challenges, including recruitment, retention and training (Salesforce, 2024). Strengthening training and upskilling opportunities is therefore critical for enabling SDOs to fully harness digital opportunities (European Fundraising Association, et al., 2024).

Philanthropy can play an important role in providing much-needed financial and technological resources for SDOs. With 88% of Asian SDOs intending to increase their use of digital technology in the next two years, philanthropic contributions—financial, in-kind and skill-based—are essential. First, direct philanthropic funding should extend beyond programmatic activities to include investments in technology, IT systems, and staff development. Greater access to unrestricted or operational funding can empower organizations to enhance their digital capacity with greater stability and flexibility. Second, companies, especially those in the technology industry, can contribute hardware, software and cybersecurity tools through in-kind donations or at a subsidized rate. Third, companies also often possess essential expertise in strategic planning and IT management. Through skill-based contributions or employee volunteering, companies can provide much-needed capacity-building, particularly in areas such as cybersecurity and the application of advanced digital tools.

4.2. Characteristics of Asian Philanthropy

Asia's rapid economic growth over the past few decades has created a strong foundation for philanthropy. The Asia Pacific region now accounts for 46.6% of global GDP (IMF, 2025). Private wealth is also expanding rapidly, with the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs) projected to reach 228,849 by 2028 (Knight Frank, 2024). Accompanying the accumulated financial resources, philanthropy holds great potential to catalyze the overall social development across the region. At the same time, distinct socio-economic dynamics, including uneven levels of development, diverse cultural traditions and varying governance structures, have shaped philanthropic practices in Asia that differ from established Western models. Recognizing these characteristics is essential for strengthening the sector and fostering cross-border understanding.

As identified by Shapiro et al. (2018), Asian philanthropy exhibits three notable characteristics. Firstly, there is a great overlap between individual and corporate philanthropy in Asia. Family-dominated firms are more prevalent in the region, with roughly two-thirds of listed Asian companies controlled by families or their foundations (Stewart Investors, 2025). This means that, in many cases, personal and family philanthropy are channeled through corporate initiatives, blurring the boundaries between business social responsibility and charitable giving. This integration often leads to pragmatic win-win solutions that benefit local communities, the environment and business objectives (CAPS, 2023c).

Secondly, Asian philanthropy tends to focus on local needs. Many economies in Asia are emerging markets with pressing domestic social and environmental challenges. Local giving towards a specific community is therefore prioritized over cross-border philanthropy, a pattern reinforced by existing personal and professional networks of the donors. This contrasts with Western philanthropy, which tends to combine local and global agendas, often framed around a specific issue. Given the declining foreign aid and shifting geopolitical dynamics, domestic giving is expected to become even more prominent in Asia.

Thirdly, philanthropic activities in Asia tend to align closely with government priorities.

Compared to Western contexts, Asian governments exert greater influence in agenda-setting and policy development (Jomo, 2001). In response, the private sector frequently mobilizes resources to support the government's initiatives, both to advance public objectives and to maintain constructive governmental relations. For example, When China's President Xi Jinping introduced the 2016-2020 national poverty alleviation plan, state-owned enterprises were required to support designated priority areas. It also significantly boosted participation from private companies and foundations. By the end of 2020, approximately 800 million people had been lifted out of poverty in the country (World Bank, 2022).

Despite these regional distinctions, both Asian and Western philanthropy are increasingly shaped by a global consensus around sustainable development. Businesses and philanthropists alike are under pressure to address social and environmental concerns, redefine stakeholder responsibilities, and integrate socioeconomic and environmental considerations into their core strategies (Marschlich & Ghanesh, 2002; Awa et.al., 2024). In several Asian economies, including India and Nepal, this shift has been formalized through mandatory CSR spending requirements (CAPS, 2024a).

5. Philanthropic Ecosystem for Technology Adoption in Asia's Social Sector

Asia's social sector has yet to fully harness the potential of digital technology. It particularly lags in advanced digital tools, cybersecurity, and staff capacity. Philanthropy increasingly plays an empowering role in bridging these gaps, especially amid geopolitical shifts and declining foreign aid. To maximize the impact of philanthropy, an enabling environment and supportive stakeholders in this ecosystem are crucial.

This section examines the philanthropic ecosystem for technology adoption in Asia's social sector (Figure 3). It highlights the roles and characteristics of key stakeholders while providing comparative insights with European counterparts. Although Western Europe enjoys the most favorable philanthropy environment according to the *Global Philanthropy Environment Index* (Indiana University Indianapolis, 2025), Asia's distinctive philanthropic landscape provides comparative insights for strengthening ecosystems across regions.

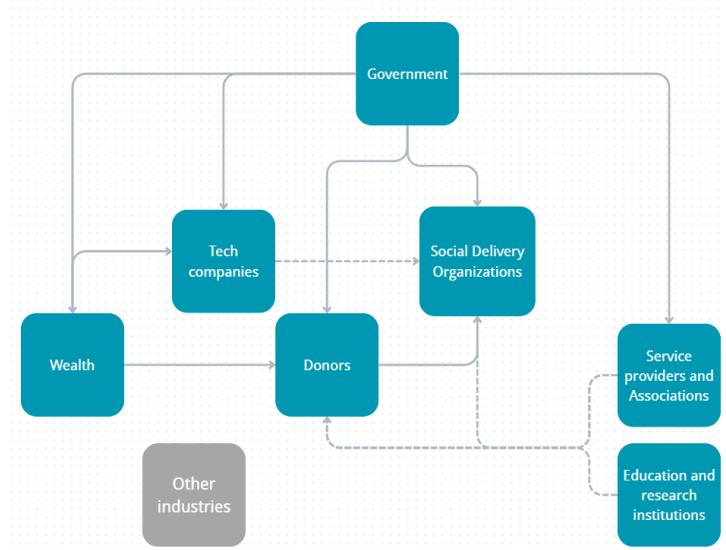


Figure 3. Philanthropic Ecosystem for Technology Adoption in the Social Sector
 Adapted from: *The Key Components for a Philanthropy Cluster*, CAPS (2023a)

5.1. Wealth: Prerequisite of philanthropy

The accumulation of private wealth is a fundamental prerequisite for philanthropy. Global wealth has grown consistently, particularly in the Asia Pacific region (Deloitte, 2024b). This wealth expansion is also reflected in Asia's rising number of UHNWIs (Table 2) (Knight Frank, 2024). This wealth creation is shaped by several key forces, with technological advancement being a primary driver (Deloitte, 2024b). Conversely, the further development of technological solutions is deeply rooted in the investment of accumulated wealth.

Table 2: Projected Increase in UHNW Individuals in Asia (2023-2028)

	2023	2028	Growth rate
Asia	165,442	228,849	38.3%
Chinese Mainland	98,551	144,897	47.0%
Hong Kong	5,957	7,290	22.4%
India	13,263	19,908	50.1%
Indonesia	1,479	1,984	34.1%
Chinese Taipei	7,640	9,174	20.1%
Thailand	889	1,020	14.7%

Source: Knight Frank, 2024.

As wealth accumulates and social needs become increasingly complex, the demand for effective approaches and tools to utilize private wealth for good intensifies. While precise data on philanthropic capital deployed in Asia remains limited, philanthropic giving tends to grow in tandem with wealth. For instance, social donations in Chinese Mainland totaled RMB 140

billion (USD 19.3 billion) in 2022 (Yang & Zhu, 2023). Among UHNWIs in the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Chinese Taipei, 97% report making philanthropic contributions and want to do more (CAPS, 2023b). Singapore's Temasek Trust raised USD 777 million when launching the Philanthropy Asia Alliance in 2022 (Philanthropy Asia Alliance, 2023), a Temasek Trust initiative dedicated to catalyzing collaborative philanthropy in Asia.

Looking forward, Asia is projected to undergo an estimated intergenerational wealth transfer of approximately USD 2.5 trillion by 2030 (Wealth-X, 2021). This transition, along with emerging technological developments, will significantly influence the region's philanthropy and its role in supporting digital adoption in the social sector.

5.2. Donors: Funders and capacity builders

Donors, including individuals, families, foundations, and corporates, provide essential resources to SDOs for accelerating technology adoption. Their contributions range from funding hardware and software to offering expertise and capacity-building. Asian donors have a long history of directly engaging with local communities and supporting local initiatives, leveraging their contextual knowledge and existing relationships (Shapiro et. al., 2018). Corporate volunteerism is also strong, with 63% of surveyed Asian SDOs reporting engagement with corporate volunteers (CAPS, 2024a). Notably, many major Asian donors have only been established in the past two decades (Bridgespan, 2024), shaping the region's philanthropy with modern characteristics. Increasingly, Asian donors are coming together to give collectively and strategically, as exemplified by the Singapore-based Asia Philanthropy Circle, launched in 2015 (CAPS, 2024b).

By contrast, Europe and North America have a highly concentrated distribution of philanthropic foundations, with nearly 60% located in Europe (Harvard Kennedy School, 2019). The difference between Asia and the West also lies in the type of work. Foundations in the United States are often grantmaking institutions (Harvard Kennedy School, 2019), while in Asia, many philanthropic entities often combine grantmaking with direct service delivery and social innovation (CAPS, 2022). Donors in the global North also take the lead in the discussion on ethical technology usage, such as the Responsible AI Institute's work on responsible AI (Hewage, 2024). This reflects a broader role of institutional philanthropy and its advocacy work, more often seen in Europe than in Asia.

5.3. Technology developers and service providers: Creators and conveyors of digital tools

Technological companies are at the forefront of developing new tools and platforms. Globally, the Tech for Good initiative⁶ has been expanding, amid growing expectations for companies to be socially responsible. The sector encompassing health tech, education tech, cleantech, femtech and enterprise ESG software is seeing increased investments, reaching \$79 billion globally in 2021 (Tan, 2023).

⁶ A descriptor for the space where technology is deployed to take on big social and environmental problems (Ming Tan, 2023).

Despite their commercial orientation, these companies have the potential to develop affordable, scalable solutions, such as AI-driven telehealth platforms or digital fundraising tools. And they can do so in collaboration with SDOs. In Thailand, AIS developed the AorSorMor Online app to connect health-promoting hospitals and volunteers for community health. In China, Alibaba's Ant Forest project uses digital technology to reward low-carbon activities with "green energy," which is then converted into real trees planted or conservation areas protected in partnership with local SDOs. In Singapore, Grab founded the nonprofit Tech For Good Institute to promote inclusive technology usage. India's Wipro offers its Salesforce software at a discount to nonprofits and provides training on using its tech for fundraising and community outreach. For the social sector, these companies can contribute beyond product development to digital maintenance, skill training, and cybersecurity support, which are essential for longer-term technology adoption. Research underscores this growing importance of software developers in nonprofit program delivery in the European context as well (Štremfelič & Valič, 2023).

The low engagement rates of Asian SDOs with third-party cybersecurity vendors (15%) and limited investment in specialized staff training (29%) (CAPS, 2024a) underscore a substantial opportunity for technology firms to enhance their support in the social sector. Targeted incentives—such as tax benefits, corporate responsibility mandates, or matched-funding schemes—can encourage better alignment between corporate innovation and social needs.

5.4. Social Delivery Organizations: Users of technology for social services

SDOs—encompassing nonprofits, NGOs, and social enterprises—are the primary end-users of technological innovation for social service delivery. The *Doing Good Index* 2024 highlights a robust collaboration among Asian SDOs, facilitating vital knowledge-sharing, partnership building, and collective advocacy (CAPS, 2024a). In fact, 84% of surveyed Asian SDOs collaborate with other SDOs, mostly to advocate for a joint cause (70%) and to deliver services (69%). About 65% of SDOs have increased their use of online platforms to collaborate with others, and 59% use digital tools to access partnership opportunities. Further technological adoption will benefit the social sector. Meanwhile, SDOs' on-the-ground experience provides the crucial feedback and real-world testing necessary to ensure that technological solutions effectively address societal needs.

However, the digital divide exists not only across different economies but also within various SDOs. While larger, well-resourced organizations may possess the infrastructure and capability to pioneer new technologies, smaller SDOs face barriers such as limited IT funding and low digital literacy, hindering their ability to fully leverage technology for social good.

5.5. Government institutions: Regulators and enablers

Government institutions establish regulatory frameworks for technology development while implementing incentives to promote philanthropic giving to the social sector. In Asia, governments are especially influential in agenda setting with significant implications for corporate and philanthropic behavior. In addition to investing in digital infrastructure,

governments establish policies to promote the development of ethical technology as well as social sector accountability. While comprehensive data protection laws are still not widespread in many Asian economies (World Bank, 2019), several are moving toward stronger AI governance frameworks, with Chinese Mainland, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea already taking steps (Norton, 2025). Government regulations encouraging accountability and transparency among SDOs can help build trust and increase donor confidence (CAPS, 2024a).

Fiscal and tax interventions can accelerate the transfer of technology to the social sector. Among the Asian SDOs, 45% have received government grants, with Singapore reaching 83% (CAPS, 2024a). These funds can be used to improve technology adoption by the SDOs. Tax incentives, such as tax deductions for charitable contributions from donors and tax exemptions for SDOs, can increase funding flows while signaling government support for the social sector. When combined with preferential or targeted schemes related to technology, these mechanisms can be further leveraged for technology adoption in the social sector.

Since philanthropy in Asia often aligns with government efforts, governments can create collaborative programs utilizing private sector technology and grassroots social expertise. Such Public-Private-Philanthropic Partnerships have emerged across many Asian economies. One example is the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, initiated by the government and supported by over 60 private sector members, which aims to build disaster-resilient communities leveraging technologies (CAPS, 2024b).

In contrast, European governments exhibit a less prominent role as funders but provide stronger regulatory frameworks. Data from Europe, Australia, and the US shows that over one-third of nonprofits have received government funding for their services (Salesforce, 2024). This is lower than in Asia. However, European regulatory frameworks, such as the GDPR and the EU AI Act, set a global standard for data security and AI governance. Many Asian countries have drawn on the European framework to develop their AI policies (Flint Global, 2025). European governments also take measures to promote technology adoption. For example, the Dutch nonprofit sector is adjusting to the government's digital transformation initiative (Štremfelj & Valič, 2023). However, regulations can also pose barriers to adopting technology due to strict data protection policies, such as in the UK (Štremfelj & Valič, 2023).

5.6. Other stakeholders: Supporting the ecosystem

Service providers and associations related to philanthropy, such as private wealth management firms, banks, and philanthropic advisors, function as intermediaries, providing information, products and services and creating linkages among wealth owners, donors and other cluster institutions (CAPS, 2023a). Philanthropy services are increasingly in demand by private wealth clients, with 88% of surveyed UHNWIs respondents in the Greater China region seeking external advice on philanthropic resources and social investment options. This indicates both a need and an opportunity for professional service providers in the philanthropy sector (CAPS, 2023b).

Education and research institutions support philanthropy and technology adoption in the

social sector by generating and disseminating knowledge. They also provide educational opportunities for wealth owners and donors to enhance their philanthropic and social investment practices grounded in evidence. Furthermore, they contribute to the human capital, thereby professionalizing the social sector and laying the foundation for further leveraging technology. Other related industries, such as art and culture, also support private wealth owners and philanthropic donors.

6. Discussion and implications

The *Doing Good Index 2024* shows that Asia's social sector is not yet fully prepared for the technological future. On one hand, the use of digital technology is now commonplace, and most SDOs demonstrate basic levels of foundational readiness. On the other hand, this progress is uneven across the region, and significant challenges remain for organizations to effectively and safely leverage digital technologies. In some economies, barriers are as fundamental as inadequate hardware or unreliable internet access. In others, the gaps lie in access to specialized software for more complex tasks, such as communication, fundraising, or program evaluation. Operational readiness is less developed than foundational capacity. Many SDOs face challenges in staff training to enable more profound digital transformation, and cybersecurity remains a pressing vulnerability. Although Asia has widely adapted innovative digital solutions, such as crowdfunding and mobile payments, these remain underutilized in the social sector. At the transformational readiness level, SDOs need more stable and flexible funding to cover digital and IT-related costs if they are to adapt to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. While Europe benefits from stronger digital infrastructure, more institutionalized strategic planning, and greater emphasis on cybersecurity and data protection frameworks, both regions face common challenges, particularly the need to build staff capacity in advanced technologies and to address evolving cyber risks.

Technology adoption has the clear potential to improve the social sector's performance in both regions, especially given the growing interest in harnessing innovation to address social challenges (e.g., the Digital Social Innovation for Europe initiative). Philanthropy can serve as a critical enabler by providing flexible financial resources, particularly unrestricted or operational funding, which allows SDOs to allocate resources according to their specific needs. In-kind donations, skill-based volunteering, and capacity-building initiatives can further strengthen infrastructure and human capital. With sustained and strategic philanthropic investments, SDOs will be better equipped to expand digital capacity, invest in organizational systems and mitigate risk. While Europe generally benefits from a more favorable regulatory and structural environment, Asia's philanthropy ecosystem—though fragmented—is evolving rapidly, shaped by its distinctive socio-economic and cultural contexts. As digital technology continues to advance, fostering cross-border collaboration is not just beneficial but essential. Knowledge exchange, co-creation of replicable solutions, and alignment of philanthropic strategies across regions can help bridge the digital divide and strengthen the resilience of the global social sector.

This article provides Asia-focused and cross-regional insights into technology adoption in the social sector. However, the analysis is primarily based on data from the *Doing Good Index 2024* survey focusing on Asia, while the comparative analysis with Europe remains limited by the lack of directly comparable data. Future research could aim to create more comparable datasets using a similar methodology across both regions, enabling more rigorous cross-regional insights.

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