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Title

Grassroots Philanthropy in Singapore in the New Millennium

Abstract

This study is part of a series of multi-disciplinary research papers that examines 200 years of Singapore’s philanthropic history. It looks at “grassroots philanthropy” – the giving of time, money, and other forms of support by ordinary citizens to one another (Ruesga 2011) – in the new millennium – defined as the time frame from 2001 to the present day.

The extant literature on philanthropy focuses on global trends that shape giving, new methods (driven by new media and technological advances), and different types of philanthropy (such as family, diaspora, venture-based, and grassroots philanthropy) in the new millennium. These studies are mostly American-centric, and there is limited scholarship on philanthropy in Asia. This study thus aims to address this gap, and contribute to an emerging understanding of philanthropy in Asia.

The goal of this exploratory qualitative research project is to gain a better understanding of the nature of grassroots philanthropy in Singapore in the new millennium. To gain a cross-cultural perspective, this project will focus on literature review of journal articles from the West (America, Europe, Australian and non-Singaporean giving patterns) as well as from Singapore (building on research from the Asia Centre of Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy). This research aims to answer two primary questions:

1. How has grassroots philanthropy in Singapore been affected by significant global and local events in the past 30 years?

2. Who are contemporary givers in Singapore, why (traditional and contemporary motivations), how, when, and to whom do they give?
From an initial literature review, we will derive key words. These words will become search terms to identify prominent contemporary Singapore-based grassroots givers who have been featured in local media, whose social impact initiatives are recognised as credible and noteworthy. In-depth interviews will then be conducted with 40 prominent initiators or leaders of organic grassroots movements in Singapore. Interviewees are all initiators or leaders of movements based in Singapore (encompassing both Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans) – from aged 21 and above (with no upper limit).

Ultimately, this work aims to provide key insight into why, how, what, and to whom Singapore-based givers give, and could also offer clues to facilitate greater public engagement to enable effective giving. It could bring to public attention opportunities and challenges in engaging contemporary givers, volunteers, and others.

**Keyword**