



**GLOBAL SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
NETWORK**

FROM SEED TO IMPACT

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A HIGH-IMPACT
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

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With the support of:





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Social entrepreneurs are passionate people who relentlessly nurture and grow entrepreneurial solutions to the world's toughest problems.

Social entrepreneurship is generating ever increasing interest as an innovative and sustainable approach to development, job creation and poverty alleviation.

The social entrepreneurship ecosystem is growing: new support organisations are setting up; donors, investors, development agencies and governments are joining the space. However, the ecosystem remains fragmented, hindering its development:

- Activities are disconnected and lack comparability.
- Best practices are difficult to identify, evidence or access.
- Finally, focus is often on “rock stars” who are already successful and operating at scale, while potentially world-changing ideas lack attention and appropriate support to grow into scalable, impactful ventures.

If we want to harness the full potential of social entrepreneurship, we need to address these challenges collectively.

We believe that one of the key solutions is to give more attention to the early-stage social entrepreneurship ecosystem, where need and potential are high but resources are limited.

The Global Social Entrepreneurship Network (GSEN) was launched in June 2013 at the Social Impact Investment Summit created under the UK Presidency of the G8. It gathers organisations supporting social entrepreneurs in 50 countries, to improve the reach, quality and sustainability of support for early-stage social entrepreneurs.

In this paper GSEN has collaborated with its global network of intermediary organisations to conduct one of the first dedicated investigations into support for early-stage social entrepreneurs. It draws on the data and experiences of 33 GSEN members to uncover the methodologies they use, as well as the opportunities and benefits of joining forces within a network.

Emerging findings lead us to the following observations:

1 GSEN MEMBERS ARE CREATING LOCAL IMPACT

GSEN members have supported over 2,600 social entrepreneurs with non-financial support and over \$14 million USD in financial support in the past year, already generating benefits for over 667,000 individuals and creating over 5,300 new jobs.

On average, 69% of social entrepreneurs supported over the past two years are still operating.

70% of GSEN members operate only in the country where they are based, partnering with organisations and businesses grounded in their country of operation to provide locally rooted support to social entrepreneurs.

2 MEMBERS ARE OFFERING SUPPORT WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST: AT THE EARLIER STAGES

To have a handful of “rock stars” in five years, we probably need to support 1,000 start-up social entrepreneurs today. Our research shows that GSEN members are concentrating their support where it is most needed: at the earlier stages of the social entrepreneurs’ journey, with 96% of members offering at least one programme targeted at pre-revenue social entrepreneurs.

3 GSEN MEMBERS ARE DIVERSE IN AGE AND SIZE, BUT OFFER SIMILAR SUPPORT SERVICES

45% of GSEN members are older than five years, with 24% having more than 10 years of experience.

GSEN member organisations are diverse, with staff numbers ranging from just one full-time and one part-time employee to 200 full-time and 30 part-time employees.

Their support programmes last on average a year, most offering mentoring, training and access to networks (with peers, customers, experts and investors).

80% of them also provide direct financial support, 77% of which is in the form of grants.

4 DEMAND FOR SUPPORT OUTSTRIPS SUPPLY

There are tens of millions of social entrepreneurs starting up in the world every year, but we are collectively supporting only a few thousand. This year, GSEN members have supported over 2,600 social entrepreneurs. Next year, support capacity is projected to increase; however, they will not have sufficient resources to provide support to all those who would have the best potential to change the world.

5 GSEN MEMBERS COULD DO MORE WITH MORE RESOURCES

The median average budget of organisations covered by this research is \$462,500 USD per annum, which we believe is relatively modest compared to other organisations in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. In addition, more than half of the organisations operate with 50% or more of their budget being restricted. A similar proportion of them also work with less than two years of financial visibility.

Early-stage social entrepreneurship is creating grassroots change in communities across the world. It is a fundamental stage in the journey of every social venture and yet is under-resourced and under-researched.

Early evidence suggests that the support model adopted by GSEN members works: it boosts revenue and employment creation for entrepreneurs who benefit from support programmes.¹ Evidence from the mainstream business support sector also shows that organisations with larger budgets perform better.¹¹

What if there were adequate resources for early-stage social entrepreneurship support?

What if there were enough well-resourced organisations providing high-quality support to all social entrepreneurs starting up, wherever they are?

We believe that GSEN members and others could create an even bigger impact:

- for all the millions of social entrepreneurs, unleashing their potential and helping them develop their entrepreneurial skills,
- for investors, improving the number of good investment-ready candidates,
- and for society as a whole, allowing for increased job and wealth creation alongside social and environmental benefits, solving the world's most critical issues.

In this report we reveal how support is currently provided to early-stage social entrepreneurs by diverse organisations, members of GSEN. It is the first step in our continuing efforts to empower the social entrepreneurship sector with knowledge, contributing to its growth and increased efficiency.

As a network, we also take the wider perspective and provide insight on how we believe the social entrepreneurship ecosystem could evolve, allowing for greater impact, thanks to more efficiency, comparability and financial resources.



2,600

social entrepreneurs supported by GSEN members last year

96%

of members offer at least one programme targeted at pre-revenue social entrepreneurs

5,300

new jobs created in the past year by GSEN members

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THE METHODOLOGY



The Global Social Entrepreneurship Network (GSEN) designed a survey, with support from UnLtd, to align with metrics used by the Impact Reporting and Investment Standards (IRIS) to allow for comparability of data collected.

The questions broadly covered four topics: (1) organisational and financial structure, (2) methods of support, (3) social impact measurement and (4) membership evaluation.¹ In January 2015 it was emailed to 50 organisations (all GSEN members) with follow-up reminders sent over the following two months. The data was downloaded on 30 March 2015 and, after removing duplicate surveys, there were 33 responses to analyse.

The response rate of 66% can be considered a good response rate for an email survey, especially as some of these organisations have modest capacity to respond. As a result we have a representative sample of GSEN members.

Data analysis uncovered a sample with large variation in organisational size, financial turnover and social impact. Potential outliers were identified and considered individually so as to determine whether they should be excluded from calculations of the mean average.²

DATA LIMITATIONS

This initial data is focused on agencies supporting early-stage entrepreneurs. Findings are specific to this group and may not represent social entrepreneurship more widely.

In addition GSEN members are diverse in terms of their organisational structure and social impact outcomes. Although we will explore this granularity within this paper, it should be noted that measures such as mean averages may not hold much value in representing the network's diversity on some questions.

¹ Seven questions asking about the experience and benefits of the GSEN membership.

² Potential outliers were identified as those more than 1.5 deviations from the mean and then considered in the context of the data range.

03

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Global Social Entrepreneurship Network (GSEN) celebrated its second anniversary in June 2015. This report falls within this context, as the first major publication of GSEN.

Its purpose is twofold:

- It aims to provide a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges in the early-stage support space, providing new data and insights into the support available to social entrepreneurs.
- It aims to describe GSEN, early evidence about its impact and the necessity of such a network in the wider context of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

This report is a major milestone in our continuing efforts to empower the social entrepreneurship sector with knowledge, contributing to its growth and increased efficiency. This research presents the nature of GSEN member organisations; it also identifies key questions that we wish to focus on in the future, when collaborating with others in the ecosystem. Finally, these emerging findings will guide us in designing future research, and allow us to measure the development of the early-stage support sector alongside the impact of our work over the coming years.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS - THE UNHARNESSED POTENTIAL

Social entrepreneurs are passionate, innovative and resilient individuals who find entrepreneurial solutions to social problems. Their ventures create jobs, alleviate poverty and make the world a better place.ⁱⁱ

There are social entrepreneurs around the world changing their communities, working with local people to tackle local problems. There are others working at the global level, taking on the major challenges of humanity, such as improving access to healthcare, food security or preservation of the environment. Common to them all is the passion to address a social or environmental cause, and the aspiration to create a venture that is financially self-sustaining.

Never before has this concept of social entrepreneurship been so visible. Increasingly, people around the world are recognising the value of change led by individuals from all areas of society.

This increase in interest has been matched by an increase in the number of people starting up a social venture: it is estimated that tens of millions of social entrepreneurs start up every year.^{iv}

Irrespective of what their ventures will become, supporting those individuals in starting their venture will develop their confidence, skills, business acumen, and ability to create social capital.^v Unfortunately, today only a few thousand of them benefit from such support.

The same increase is happening with the impact investment available to fund them. In just one year the total value of social impact investment available worldwide has risen by 30%, from \$46 billion USD in 2014^{vi} to \$60 billion USD in 2015.^{vii}

Many of these newly started ventures are in the early stages of their development, yet most of the financial resources available for social entrepreneurs are targeted at the later stages of the pipeline. In a study of African Impact Investors, only six out of eighty-four invested in early-stage social initiatives.^{viii} Similarly, in a report led by the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) and Village Capital, fewer than 10 of 300 self-described “impact investment funds” invested at less than \$250,000 per company.^{ix}



Social enterprises address social and environmental issues and at the same time grow the economy. Therefore, strengthening the social enterprise development may indeed help Indonesia resolve the current challenges and concurrently maintain its economic growth.

UnLtd Indonesia, founded 2014

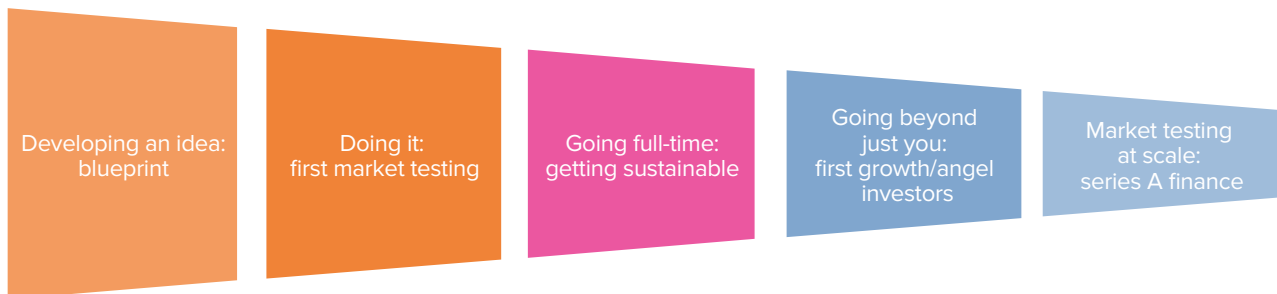
Although there is an appetite for supporting and investing in established, scalable enterprises, there is currently a shortage of ventures at this stage. This absence has been confirmed by multiple sources, with investors citing a ‘shortage of high quality investment opportunities with track record’ as the second greatest challenge to growth of the impact investment industry (Saltuk et al., 2015).

The development of the social entrepreneurship sector is hindered by a mismatch between the investment on offer and suitable ventures to invest in.

Impact investing (as defined by GIIN):

Impact investments are investments made into companies, organisations and funds with the intention to generate social and environmental impacts alongside a financial return.

They can be made in both emerging and developed markets, and target a range of returns from below market to market rate, depending upon the circumstances.

Figure 1: The Social Entrepreneur Pipeline

To accelerate social change and harness the full potential of social entrepreneurship, resources channelled into early-stage initiatives are crucial to feed the pipeline and develop deal flow for impact investors.

Data and experience of supporters suggest that there is roughly one social entrepreneur out of ten moving on to the next stage of the journey.^x This means that around 1,000 social entrepreneurs would need support at the idea stage and market test/prototype stage. Then about 100 will reach sustainability, where they would operate at small scale, creating valuable local impact in their communities. However, not all of those will look for significant investment or ambition to scale up. Therefore, only around 10 of those would reach the growth stage,

where they become of interest to the impact investment community. Those entrepreneurs will grow to achieve significant scale, and become the “rock stars” who will reach the spotlights at the end of the pipeline (in other words, raise significant investment and/or scale internationally and/or become a Schwab, Skoll or Ashoka fellow for instance).

Intermediary organisations are essential to generate the volume of quality start-up ventures for the pipeline. The better the resources available and the more efficient supporters become, the better the pipeline will be.

Example of a social entrepreneur supported by UnLtd India (GSEN member):

After years working for agricultural NGOs, Vijaya Pastala used her knowledge and experience to set up her social venture: Under the Mango Tree. This venture improves income for poor rural producers by training farmers in beekeeping and developing sustainable and long-term markets that empower them. When Vijaya approached UnLtd India, she had a broad concept which she was able to develop into a successful business model with their support. “UnLtd India supported us through mentoring, vision building, building our capacity to deliver, helping us move from a particular level to the next level, as a business, as an enterprise. I think those are the big things.” Now, six years on, Under the Mango Tree has supported 1,452 rural producers by selling their honey at a fair price to sustainable markets and supported the development of livelihood diversification. This now means more farmers are able to bring home a fair wage to support themselves and their families.

SUPPORTERS - A CRITICAL LINK IN THE CHAIN

Mainstream enterprise support has existed since at least the 1980s. It is estimated that there are currently about 7,000 business incubators worldwide.^{xii} Social entrepreneurs could perhaps turn to them for support. Indeed, social entrepreneurs face similar challenges to traditional entrepreneurs when starting up. However, they also face additional and specific challenges, given that their main mission is to solve a social or environmental problem.

Many social initiatives, particularly those supplying bottom of the pyramid markets, take time and effort to overcome the barriers of reaching financial stability. For example, the microfinance industry required over 10 years to reach full maturity.^{xiii} Social ventures face challenges such as establishing new distribution channels, navigating multiple stakeholder demands (funders, beneficiaries, customers and governments) and/or working with markets that have little or no disposable income. In the meantime they are striving for financial sustainability (Hanlet et al., 2015).

Specialised support is therefore needed for social entrepreneurs, especially at start-up level.

We estimate that there are only about 150 organisations worldwide offering social entrepreneurs dedicated support at the early stage.³ This doesn't seem enough to respond to the demand for start-up support.



Entrepreneurship is hard, designing business models and building enterprises is hard. We play a critical role in enabling more social entrepreneurs to fulfil their potential and deliver impact because we provide specialised coaching, support services, and connections.

Akina Foundation, New Zealand, founded 2008

Early-stage social entrepreneur supporters recognise that every social venture success story started with an idea and a person who made it happen. **They offer support to help entrepreneurs transform ideas into reality.** Support comes in many forms but often includes some seed funding alongside non-financial support. This can provide access to business and leadership development (e.g. coaching, mentoring, business advisory, thematic training and advisory), infrastructure (e.g. access to office space) and networks (e.g. access to potential investors, customers and peers).

Social Entrepreneur Supporter:

Social entrepreneur supporters are organisations providing social entrepreneurs with financial and/or non-financial support. This includes, but is not exclusive to, incubators (flexible combinations of consultancy, infrastructure and networks to nurture new ventures through early-stage development), and accelerators (organisations offering specific services to their clients with demonstrated success, to grow their venture). We prefer the term 'social entrepreneur supporter' or 'social entrepreneur support organisation' as we are interested in any methodology that brings about our agreed outcome: enabling social entrepreneurs to create strong, positive social impact first, while helping them to become increasingly financially sustainable.

³ Estimations based on 52 GSEN members, 50 organisations members of Conveners.org who provide support at the early-stage level and about another 50 organisations that do not belong to these networks.

Early evidence suggests that this type of support is effective in the mainstream space: it boosts revenue and employment creation for entrepreneurs who benefit from support programmes (Roberts et al., 2015). It also increases survival rates by 10–15% compared to non-incubated businesses.^{xiii} Research specifically focused on the social entrepreneur sector is limited but impact data from UnLtd UK shows 98% of social entrepreneurs rated its support as having a positive impact on the progress of their venture. Around a third of entrepreneurs UnLtd supported believe they would have been unable to run their venture at all without this support (UnLtd, 2015). Other sources also indicate that early-stage ventures tend to highly value services received from their support organisation giving them an estimated value of over \$13,500 USD.^{xiv 4}



The sector is changing very rapidly so the opportunity to share best practice that enables sector growth and drives increased impact is of huge value.

School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) Australia, founded 2009

The sector is still emerging, best practices are not consistently identified or disseminated, and impact data on many issues is lacking. Therefore, support methods used are sometimes experimental and based on intuition and experience rather than data. This also leads to a lack of comparability across programmes and perhaps to inefficiencies across the sector (such as organisations reinventing what already works or failed somewhere else).

Support organisations are under pressure to deliver and they want to learn from others what creates the most impact. It is clear that there is a strong need for transnational sharing of successful tools, methodologies and experience, in order to build a strong community of practice based on the highest quality standards.

⁴ Promising results aside, there is still a lot of work to be done to make the case for support, and demonstrate what works and why in supporting social entrepreneurs.

98%

of social entrepreneurs rated UnLtd's support as having a positive impact on the progress of their venture



The role of GSEN is critical for the support organisations worldwide, since social entrepreneurship is still a relatively new phenomenon. Many intermediary agencies especially those in developing countries are often struggling to find enough attention and support for themselves to sustain their work on building ecosystems for social entrepreneurs. GSEN brings us together, enables us to share experiences and skills openly among members, and is an advocate for more cross-sector collaboration. We are so proud and so happy to be with this close and warm family.

NPI, China, founded 2006

A NETWORK - MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Our vision: a world where people find it easy to get support to start and thrive as social entrepreneurs, wherever they are.

The Global Social Entrepreneurship Network (GSEN) was launched at the Social Impact Investment Summit under the UK Presidency of the G8 in June 2013 for organisations supporting social entrepreneurs, especially those at early stages. With just nine members in 2013, there are now 52 operating in 50 countries.⁵

GSEN focuses on increasing the reach, quality and sustainability of support for early-stage social entrepreneurs, thereby fostering a more robust social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

It does this by creating widely accessible and cost-effective know-how and best-practice capture, exchange, and dissemination.

Ultimately, GSEN seeks to improve social outcomes by bringing together partners to transform a fragmented system, into a powerful tool to accelerate and scale up social change.

GSEN brings organisations together to understand and share what works in supporting social entrepreneurs. It creates a strong community of practice based on evidence-backed quality standards. As a result, GSEN members become more efficient in providing higher quality support to social entrepreneurs and are able to support more of them to start up, grow, become investment ready and create sustainable social impact.

GSEN is a member-owned and member-led network. Its members' motivation for joining GSEN is to learn from their peers. The strength of the network is deeply rooted in the high level of member expertise, commitment to learning from each other and knowledge-sharing.

GSEN is a community and a global movement, based on mutual support and true cooperation. It believes that social entrepreneur supporters are stronger together, to transform the world in which they live.

⁵ Correct as of 21/05/2015.



Change begins as local actions spring up simultaneously in many different areas. If these changes remain disconnected, nothing happens beyond each locale. However, when they become connected, local actions can emerge as a powerful system with influence at a more global or comprehensive level.

Margaret Wheatley & Deborah Frieze (2006)^{xv}



GSEN creates value beyond conventional networks or industry exchanges: it gathers “best-in-class” support organisations and thereby stretches the quality of our work. Drawing on the international expertise and inspired by passionate professionals we are able to leapfrog some innovation steps in our incubation programme. Also, GSEN acts as a sounding board for our own organisational development: we reflect the scaling strategy and improve our understanding on what methodology really helps a social venture in different contexts and phases. Therefore, we can conclude: joining GSEN pays off in both professional and personal dimensions.

Social Entrepreneurship Akademie, Germany, founded 2010

GSEN'S TOOLBOX

PEER SUPPORT:

Membership provides access to support models (mapped and soon evidence-backed) and a wide range of talent and expertise within the network.

ONLINE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE:

The Members' Portal is home to an interactive forum, a library of hand-picked resources (ready-to-use tools, and templates with demonstrated impact), webinars and online thematic workgroups.

FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING AND CONNECTING:

GSEN hosts regular events for members, partners and supporters. Regional meet-ups gather members face-to-face to tackle local context-specific issues, and learning weeks dig deeper into programmes to reflect and share expertise. Each year members, international stakeholders and potential funders gather for a global event, fostering a broader ecosystem perspective.

DATA SERVICES AND RESEARCH:

GSEN is developing tools to help measure and demonstrate collective impact. The network offers advice to members to develop impact assessment strategies, and conducts critical research on issues identified by the network.

FUNDRAISING SUPPORT AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:

GSEN brokers partnerships, leads collaborative projects, offers content and support on funding proposals, shares funder briefings and makes key introductions to potential funders.

GLOBAL REACH AND INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY:

Members become part of an expert global network, connecting with influencers around the world and expanding reach through high-value partnerships. A far-reaching network membership base makes GSEN uniquely placed to speak to media and policy makers.

GSEN AND ITS MEMBERS SHARE CORE VALUES:

- We believe that every community and every country will find its own path to support social entrepreneurs
- We believe that the sharing of methods, tools and results will contribute to strengthening social entrepreneurship in all countries
- We act and learn from results to improve our approach
- We believe that there are individuals everywhere who have the potential to make positive change in the world
- We believe in the value of social entrepreneurs across the spectrum who bring about change from local to global levels
- We put people at the heart of what we do, backing people first, because it is people who lead ventures
- We support people in their own ideas for improving their world, dedicated to peaceful paths to social and environmental improvement
- We reach out and find people who can tackle the key issues facing society and the environment
- We believe that people in communities which face problems are part of the solution and they are most likely to create the most relevant solutions
- We are committed to respect and equal opportunity for all people of the world

CASE STUDIES

NPI: GSEN MEMBER SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN CHINA

NPI (Non-Profit Incubator) is a cluster of intermediary agencies supporting the emerging third sector in China. It was founded in 2006 to address an issue: the non-profit sector had difficulty finding support and resources despite offering services in high demand. NPI created a specialised programme, providing support to newly established, early-stage civil society organisations, NGOs and social enterprises.

Since then NPI has become one of the largest and most influential domestic NGOs in China, operating in 21 cities across four regions. The support NPI provides has evolved and scaled, and its success has led it to be adapted by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and replicated by other incubators. NPI works through many programmes, including a start-up training platform, an accelerator and partnerships with universities and colleges. It also provides consultancy services and advice to other incubators and philanthropists.

Mr Alan Wang co-founded Be Better Education, which benefited from incubation by NPI six years ago. Since then, with some continued support from NPI, Be Better Education has provided economic citizenship education to half a million underprivileged children. Four months ago, Be Better Education was accepted into NPI's accelerator programme, which will help it achieve its ambitious goal of providing services to more than 50 million children and youth in the next five years.

NPI brings to the network great skills and competencies from many years as an incredible ecosystem builder, as well as good experience working closely with the government and a wide range of corporate and non-profit organisations.

"We think support organisations for early-stage social entrepreneurs globally are lacking communication with and are neglected by mainstream donors/investors. Sharing and communication among supporting organisations is also far from enough. We joined GSEN because it is just the answer to those challenges."

KATARSIS VENTURES & DREAMS INDEED: GSEN MEMBERS FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN CONFLICT FRAGILE COUNTRIES

Richard Catherall founded Katarsis Ventures in 2011 to make change happen in post-conflict and transition societies. This focus was born out of research and experience showing that the entrepreneurs in these parts of the world can bring about transformational change and deliver significant economic development in the meantime. Outcomes of the work are considerable and happen quickly. Katarsis Ventures use an asset-based community development approach, building on the strengths and resources of the entrepreneurs and their communities, then investment brokering to scale up what works.

Dreams InDeed is another GSEN member that focuses on strengthening local social entrepreneurs in conflict fragile countries. It supports individuals so their dream for a transformed community can become a light that encourages others. An example of an organisation it has supported is Care With Love, in Egypt, a sustainably profitable social enterprise creating hundreds of jobs caring for the elderly and chronically ill. When Care With Love's attempts at franchising for scaled impact stalled, the founder contacted Dreams InDeed to assist in developing a values-based curriculum to invigorate core values practiced in its network, resulting in improved caregiver performance.

Katarsis Ventures and Dreams InDeed bring to GSEN a different perspective based on high impact in challenging contexts, with low budgets and amazing stories from unexpected places. Meanwhile, Richard says:

"The social entrepreneurs in these places, I found to be defying all odds, bending rules to fit, and overcoming enormous barriers at a personal, enterprise and societal level. Part of the gain and pain of working in these parts of the world, is that you are surrounded by pioneers, although that also means, there is little money! Being part of GSEN in this context, roots us in a global movement aiming to achieve similar things in different contexts and that is a useful benchmark. Hopefully it will become a hotbed of support and potential collaboration."

04 FINDINGS

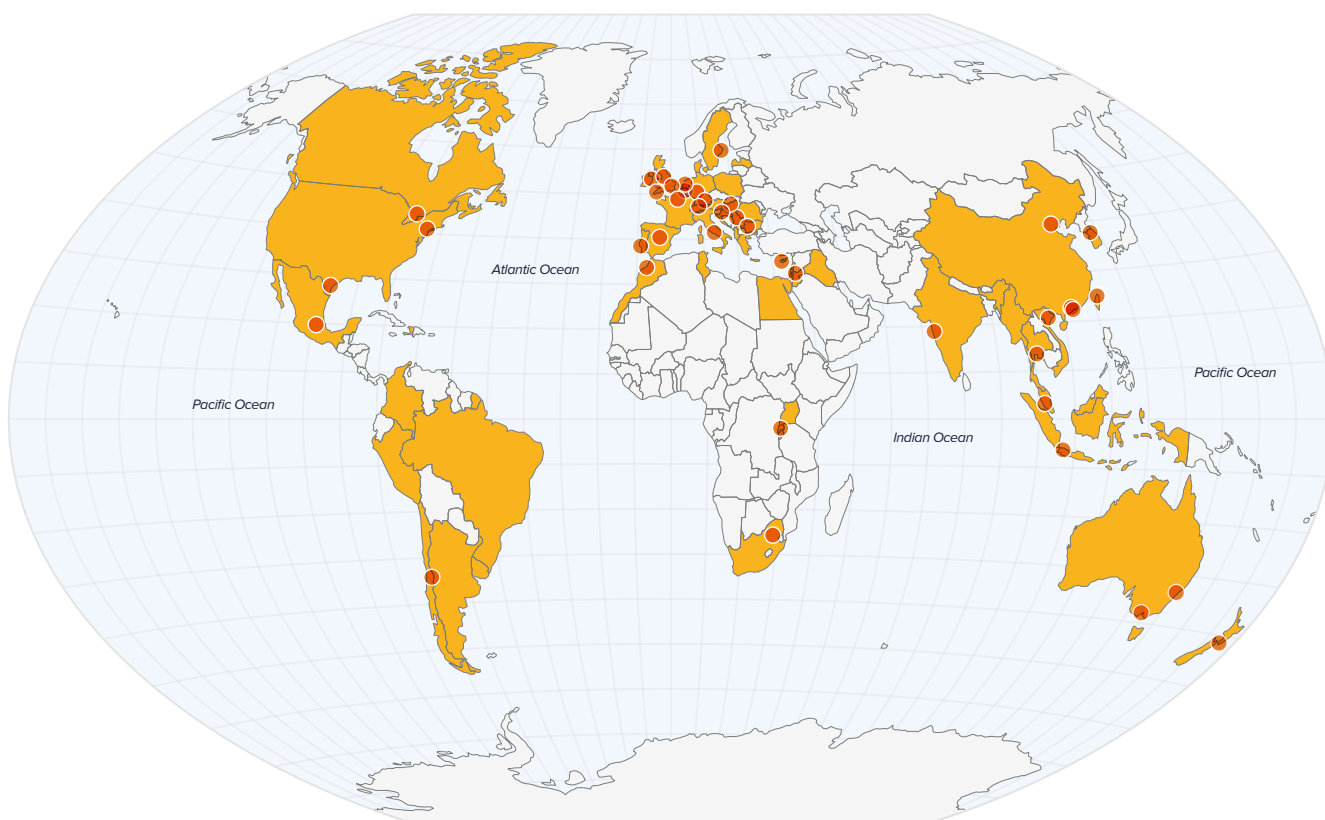


WHO ARE GSEN MEMBERS?

GSEN is a network of organisations with expertise and professional skills in supporting early-stage social entrepreneurs. Members include community-based organisations (such as Blue Ridge Labs @ Robin Hood, a New York-based social impact incubator), newly founded organisations (such as UnLtd Indonesia), national social entrepreneurship support networks (such as CEDRA in Croatia) and larger support organisations with several in-country agencies (such as NESsT operating in more than eight countries or Yunus Social Business in seven countries).

Together they support social entrepreneurs across six continents, in at least 50 countries worldwide. Fundamentally, they all share the same vision of enabling early-stage social entrepreneurs to have greater impact, by providing them with financial and non-financial support. This support is generally provided in a package including various components commonly used by supporters (see details in “What’s on offer?”).

Figure 2: Countries where GSEN members operate



TYPOLOGY

The core principles of how members support social entrepreneurs are similar. Yet certain features of their methodology allow differentiation between “types” of organisations. These types are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, they give a sense of the “main flavour” their support offers. Usually, member organisations would belong to several “types”; however, this typology aims to provide an insight into their uniqueness.



SKILLS

Skills-centred members are based around particular models of support provision where the individual social entrepreneur’s skill set is developed, enabling her/him to become the founding initiator of a successful social venture. The support offer can be around cohort-based training (such as at School for Social Entrepreneurs Australia), or individual support through expert mentors and coaches (such as the professional coaching trajectory offered by Oksigen Lab in Belgium to the social entrepreneurs they support; or the online database and matching platform developed and facilitated by Sociale Innovatie Fabriek in Belgium that enables social entrepreneurs to connect with carefully selected “sparring partners” or thematic experts). Even with a number of other complementary services usually part of their programmes, training, coaching and mentoring are at the heart of the support models of these organisations.



TAILOR-MADE

Other members (such as UnLtd Hong Kong or Project Ahead in Italy) would differentiate themselves by the individual approach they adopt in their support. Each entrepreneur will receive a tailor-made support programme specifically developed around her/his needs (with a mix of mentoring, thematic training, connection with peers and networks). This programme will often be developed by a dedicated “Support Manager”, who will be the main touchpoint and critical friend for the entrepreneur as she/he goes through the programme. This model is particularly effective for very early stage entrepreneurs and those with very different backgrounds and initial needs. For example, a young person setting up a social venture to provide more sport activities for youths in her/his local area will need a different support programme (with different support intensity) than a retired person who spent her/his career in banking and is now setting up a social venture around financial literacy. Often these organisations will also adopt a place-based support approach, as an additional way to tailor their programmes. Indeed, they will be dedicated to entrepreneurs who are based in or provide support within the same city or geography. They will connect these entrepreneurs primarily with the network of support within their city/area (an asset-based approach) of founders, investors, industry experts and service providers (e.g. UnLtd USA in Austin or Blue Ridge Labs @ Robin Hood in New York).



THEMATIC

Theme-focused members are motivated by transforming a particular issue. They provide support tailored to the needs of social entrepreneurs tackling the issue or selected from an underserved group (such as youth, women, or elderly people). For example, the Intercivil Society focuses on youth employment through inter-generational and intercultural cooperation programmes. As another example, the WWF Switzerland, which has been working in environmental conservation for over 50 years, supports social entrepreneurs tackling climate change in a joint initiative called Innovate4Climate.



INVESTMENT READINESS

Several members (such as Yunus Social Business, The Difference Incubator in Australia, Centre for Social Entrepreneurship in Stockholm, or Synergy Social Ventures in Asia) focus on getting early-stage social entrepreneurs and their ventures to the point where other investors are prepared to invest. This often involves similar activities to other supporters, just with different priorities, sometimes more intensity and slightly different methods of implementation. For instance, selection criteria and processes will be more detailed (closer to an actual due diligence process), and/or financial support might, for example, come in forms of repayable grants, matched funding for any investment leveraged, or equity taken in the venture.



SPACE

Support of some members is built around space that they provide. This is often accompanied by support programmes inspired by any of the above methodologies but the key idea is that the space encourages peer support to build up. Creating a start-up social venture can be a very lonely journey, full of pitfalls, even more so in countries where entrepreneurial culture is still in the early stages of development. Getting office space within a support organisation allows access to daily on-demand support. This is a model adopted by Sense Cube in Paris and Mexico. Another innovative example is the Social Entrepreneur Residence offered by Root Impact in Seoul, South Korea. Recognising that social entrepreneurs can feel like aliens when looking for support from their friends or family, Root Impact offers start-up social entrepreneurs a space to live and work in for a year, enabling impactful bonds and synergies.



ECOSYSTEM

Larger member organisations have grown to become hybrid hubs that provide comprehensive support programmes, permanently innovating, with a range of different types of support methodologies. Externally, these members usually take an ecosystem perspective, influencing and supporting other organisations to start their own support programmes. Internally, these members are also able to offer support to a range of entrepreneurs and ventures: from inspiring people to “start something social”, to getting proven social ventures investment ready. For example, CSIP in Vietnam works with the government to influence policy, with corporates on inclusive business models, and with NGOs to help them become more socially entrepreneurial. They provide support to social entrepreneurs from the Mekong area countries and are designing a social investment fund to provide additional financial resources to social entrepreneurs. UnLtd India is also a good example with their ‘Affiliate Network’: supporting individuals and organisations to adapt the UnLtd India model in nine states of India (already established in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, and Hyderabad). In this way they can achieve impact at a national level without compromising the power of community and locality. Oksigen Lab also describes itself as an “ecosystem for social impact”: with their sister organisation i-propeller and their impact investment fund SI² Fund, they are able to offer a range of services to social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. Finally UnLtd UK is another good example. Beyond its core tailor-made support programmes for early-stage social entrepreneurs, which go from idea to investment readiness, UnLtd UK experiments with 17 different support programmes (focused on industry verticals such as healthcare, on innovative models such as peer support ventures, on social issues such as ageing, etc.). UnLtd UK also works with 170 partners across the country and has transferred its support model to 80 universities.

IMPACT CREATED BY GSEN MEMBERS

Through the methods described in this report, GSEN members have supported over **2,600 social ventures** in at least 50 countries over the past 12 months. This has included providing over **\$14 million USD of financial support** along with non-financial support. Over **667,000 unique individuals** have been affected by the social entrepreneurs and over **5,300 jobs have been created**.⁶ Five members were able to share their historic social impact data which went back almost 10 years. Collectively, they had benefited nearly five million beneficiaries between them, an average of over 900,000 each.

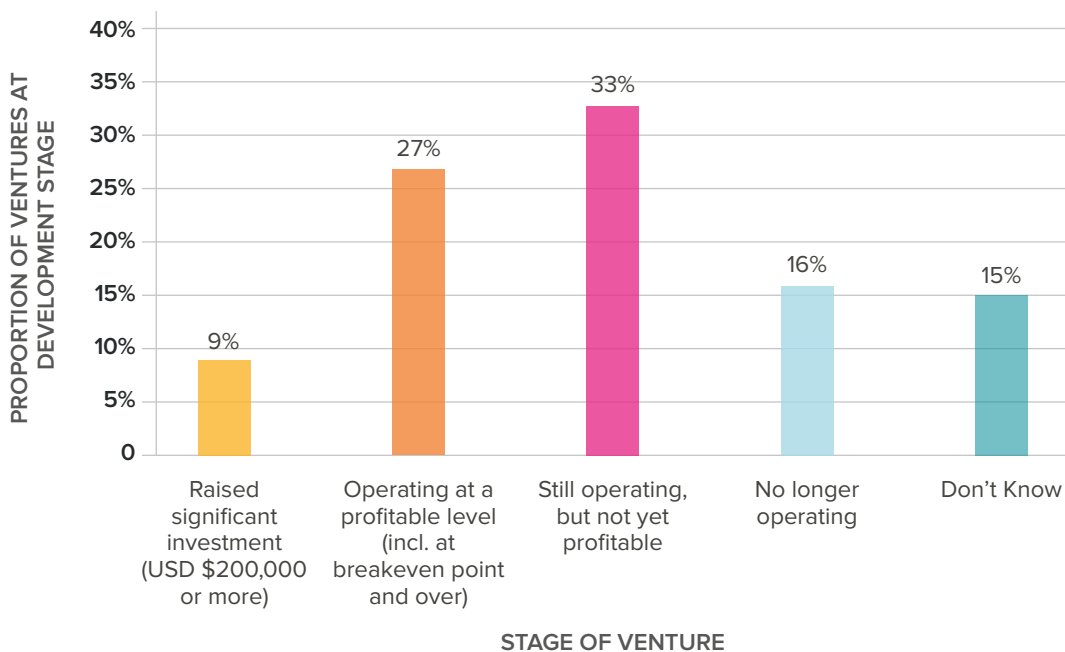
On average, for every **\$1,000 USD of financial support** provided by GSEN members, social entrepreneurs are creating one job. This is a slightly lower cost than for mainstream incubators (Lewis et al., 2011), hence

promising evidence for the potential of increased impact by GSEN members if they get more resources.⁷

Of the ventures supported in the past two years, **on average 69% are still operating**. This includes 9% of ventures which have raised significant investment of \$200,000 USD or more, 27% which are operating at a profitable level and 33% who are still operating but not yet profitable.⁸ Only 16% are no longer operating.

Considering that many of these ventures were supported at the earliest stages, and are operating in hard-to-reach markets, this data is promising evidence of the resilience of these ventures when supported by expert organisations.⁹ It is also very comparable to survival rates of organisations graduating from mainstream incubators (Lewis et al., 2011).

Figure 3: Stage of ventures supported by members in the past two years



⁶ Preceding 12 months refers to the 12 months before the survey was filled out. N counts differ for the varying statistics, investment figures (n=20), number of ventures supported (n= 28), beneficiaries (n=8), job creation (n=12).

⁷ We have tried to provide comparisons with mainstream business support when possible. Although these can be a useful reference, they are not necessarily representative as such research has been carried out mainly in the US and Europe.

⁸ Of the ventures supported, the current operating status of an average of 15% was unknown.

⁹ This will need further research with control groups or benchmarks to create a better indicator demonstrating that this is truly promising evidence.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

GSEN members represent a diverse range of organisational structures. Staff numbers range from just one full-time and one part-time employee to 200 full-time and 30 part-time employees.¹⁰ In general, as the size of the organisation increases, so does the annual operating budget, with the full range running from \$18,000 to over \$18 million USD per year. On average, GSEN members have 11 full-time and 6 part-time employees, providing on average support to 15 social entrepreneurs per staff member. Their mean average annual turnover is about \$1 million USD (median: \$462,500). This is far lower than the \$9.6 million USD (median: \$3 million USD) reported by European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) in their survey of venture philanthropy and social investment organisations.^{xvi}

THE OLD AND THE NEW

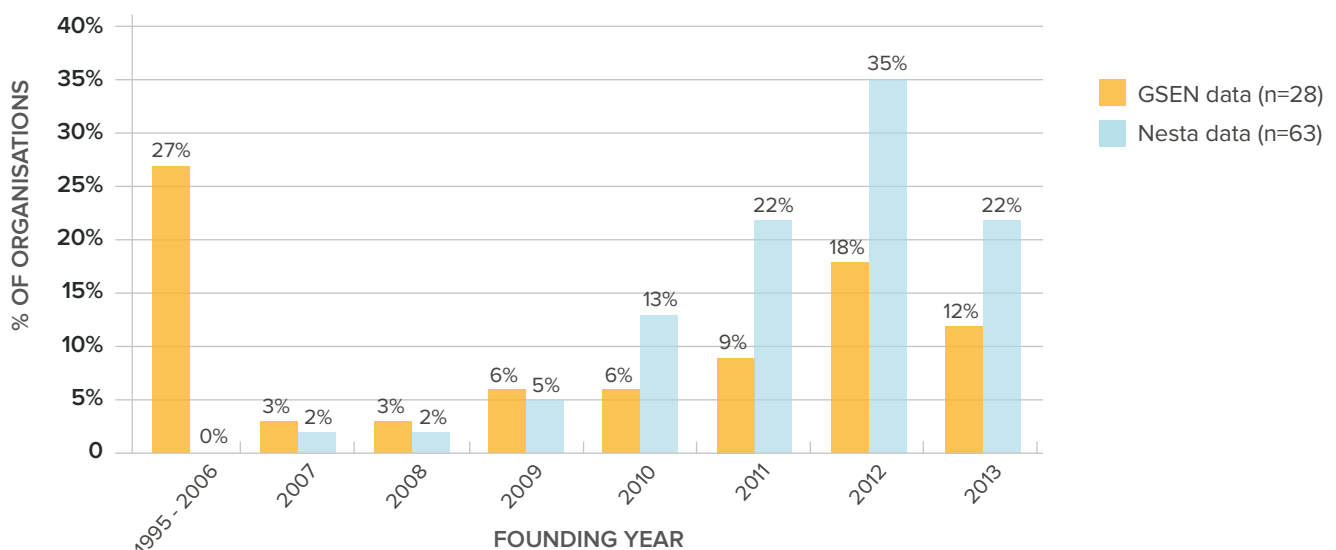
Member organisations vary considerably in age. Previous reports have described social entrepreneur supporters as a relatively new breed, with just 27% being five years or older (Baird et al., 2013). Similarly, all 63 of the social incubators surveyed in Nesta's Good Incubation report were founded in 2007 or thereafter.^{xvii} Our data mirrors theirs in the increase of agencies starting up between 2007 and 2012, but it also exposes a more established type of support agency.

Forty-five percent of GSEN members are more than five years old, with 24% having 10 or more years of experience. These organisations tend to be larger with over twice as many employees (15 full-time,

10 part-time) and three times the operating budget (\$1,700,000 USD) compared to their younger counterparts. On average they receive almost twice as many applications and give away 26% more in financial support than newer organisations.¹¹ Hence GSEN includes a number of organisations experienced in supporting social entrepreneurs and previously excluded from analysis of the landscape.

This data may indicate a promising future for recently founded supporters; one where they have the potential to grow into more established organisations with greater financial and human capital to create social change. However, it could also be that older organisations tend to have greater financial and human capital because these are indicators of a healthy organisation, and those without did not survive beyond five years.

Figure 4: Founding years of GSEN organisations mapped against Nesta data¹²



¹⁰ Aggregated part-time and full-time employees.

¹¹ On average older members give out \$350,000 USD of financial support in total to social entrepreneurs which is 26% more than younger organisations (\$280,000 USD).

¹² Five organisations founded in 2014 have been excluded from this analysis as there is no comparison data from Nesta's report.

NO SUPPORT WITHOUT PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

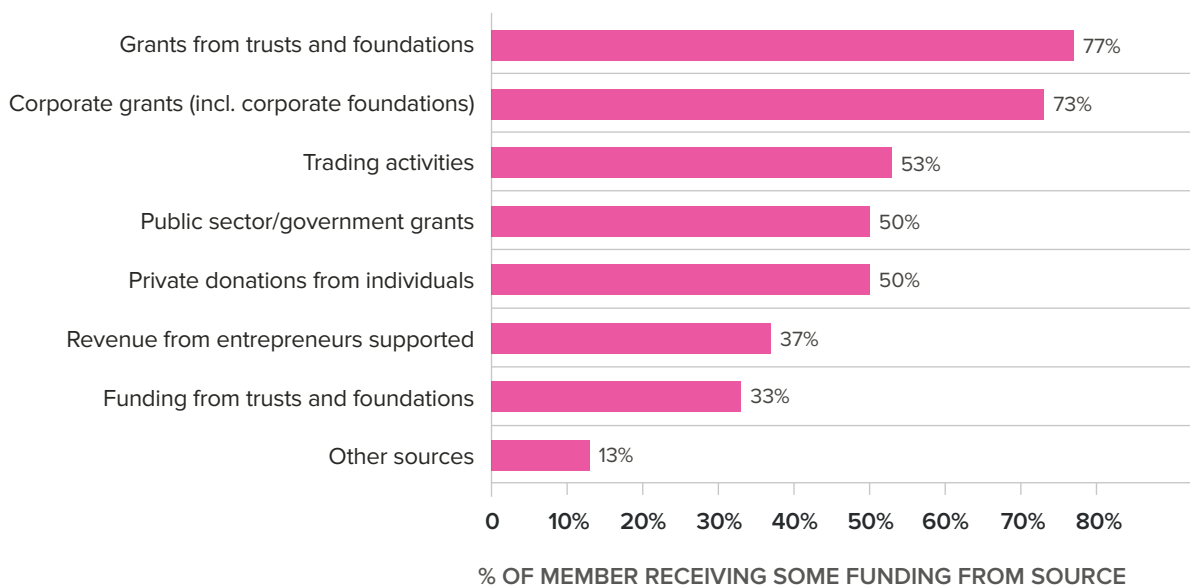
All GSEN members are reliant to some extent on philanthropic support: 81% of members receive at least half of their funding from philanthropic sources. This builds on the findings of another report in the sector, where 75% of all accelerators sampled relied on some level of philanthropic support, with over 50% of all funding coming from philanthropy (Baird et al., 2013). In further detail: 77% of GSEN members receive grants from trusts and foundations and 73% of members receive grants from corporates.

Our research suggests that current funding sources are diverse with members on average accessing at least four different streams and thus spreading their risk. However, more than half of the organisations operate with 50% or more of their budget being restricted.¹³ Besides, 55% of members operate with less than two years of financial visibility.¹⁴ This suggests that a majority of these organisations have little room to respond to non-projected demand or opportunities, and need to focus significant efforts on raising further funds.

In total, 97% of GSEN members are accessing funding from national sources (52% have the majority of their funding from national sources) and 74% are accessing some international funding (31% have the majority of their funding from international sources).¹⁵ There are also early indicators of agencies (19 out of 30) exploring revenue-generating income streams, such as trading activities and entrepreneur fees, although at present this represents a minority of their income – usually less than 25%. This data suggests there is scope for increased revenue generating activities, alongside traditional philanthropic funding.

Finally, evidence from mainstream incubation research shows that incubators with larger budgets perform better (Lewis et al., 2011). Given that GSEN members are operating with modest budgets, this suggests that additional financial resources could help GSEN members achieve greater impact.

Figure 5: GSEN members' funding streams (n=30)



¹³ This means that they have restrictions on what the budget can be spent on, usually imposed by or jointly agreed with funders.

¹⁴ This means that they have confidence that they can keep delivering support to social entrepreneurs within the next two years, but not beyond.

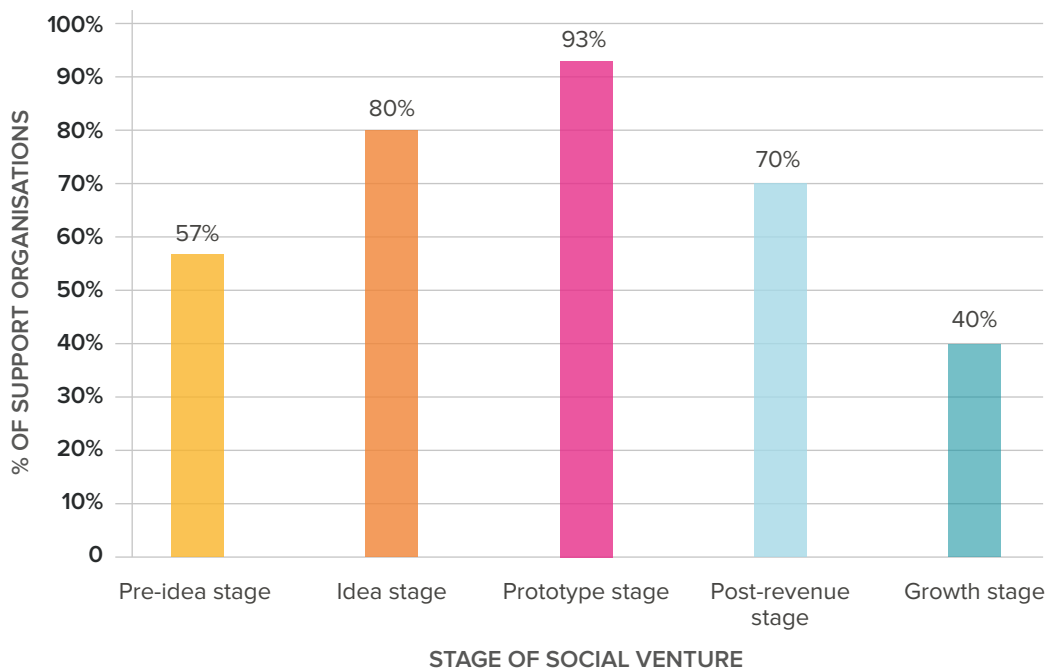
¹⁵ 10% have an approximately even split between international and national sources, and 7% are unknown.

WHO IS SUPPORTED

PLUGGING THE EARLY STAGE SUPPORT GAP

GSEN members offer a range of support services to social entrepreneurs. They are primarily focused on early-stage entrepreneurship, a market that is largely underserved given the size of the demand for support at that level. If we estimate that tens of millions of social entrepreneurs start up every year in the world, and only about 150 organisations worldwide offer them dedicated support at early stage¹⁶, we can conclude that demand massively outstrips supply.

Figure 6: Stages of social ventures targeted by members (n=30)¹⁷



- 1. Pre-idea stage: increasing awareness of/interest in social entrepreneurship
- 2. Idea stage: conceiving and developing an idea to solve a social problem
- 3. Prototype stage: developing, piloting and testing the idea/the entrepreneurial model
- 4. Post-revenue stage: product or service sold, but no major capital raised and cash-flow is not yet positive
- 5. Growth stage: formalising and professionalising, raising major capital and/or cash flow is positive

¹⁶ Estimations based on 52 GSEN members and 50 organisations members of Conveners.org who provide support at early-stage level and about another 50 organisations that do not belong to these networks.

¹⁷ Percentages do not add up to 100 as some members are targeting multiple stages.

Early-stage Social Entrepreneurship:

There is some difference in opinion about the definition of “early-stage”. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) defines it as ‘the phase that combines the stage before the start of a new firm (nascent entrepreneurship) and the stage directly after the start of a new firm (owning-managing a new firm)’. Others recently categorised early-stage enterprises as those with less than \$500,000 USD in annual revenue (I-DEV, 2014). GSEN takes the stance that early-stage social entrepreneurship represents pre-growth stages, as listed 1 to 4 in Figure 6. We prefer to consider development stages in the journey of an entrepreneurial venture. We believe that this is a more generally applicable measure, as financial criteria might not necessarily apply in the same way across the world.¹⁸

Figure 7: Mapping of support available to social entrepreneurs¹⁹

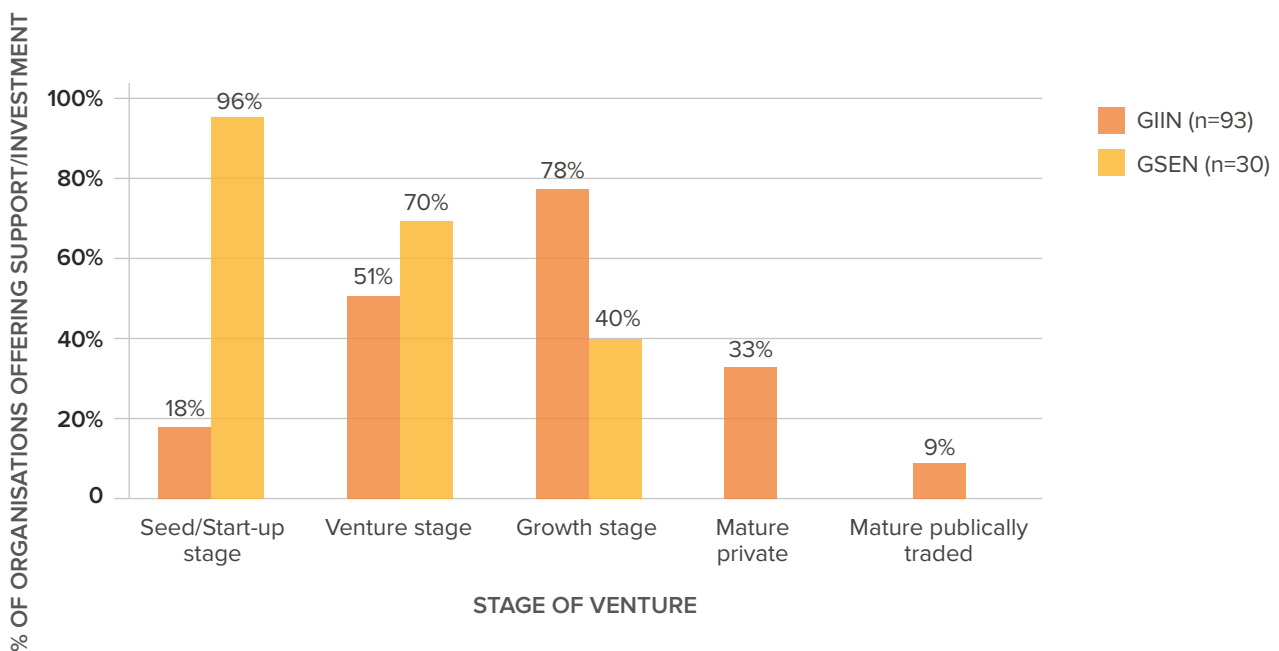


Figure 7 shows the stages of social venture development GSEN members typically target in their programmes mapped against data by Saltuk et al. (2013) which shows the preferred stage investors want to invest in. This shows that GSEN members provide the majority of their support (financial and non-financial) at the earlier stages of venture development, which are those with the greatest volume of social entrepreneurs (G8 Taskforce on Social Impact Investment, 2014). This appears to be a genuine gap in financial support: data from Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) shows that the majority of social investment is available at the growth stage. Therefore, GSEN members play an important role in developing early-stage social ventures into potential investment candidates for investors such as those surveyed by GIIN.

¹⁸ However, we are ready to collaborate with others to work on a common definition which would apply for the sector.

¹⁹ GSEN data (see fixed-choice options, page 21, options 1-5) was mapped to GIIN’s categories as follows:

- “Seed/start-up stage – business idea exists, but little has been established operationally (pre-revenues)” = pre-idea stage, idea stage, prototype stage;
- “Venture stage – operations are established, company may or may not be generating revenues, but not yet positive EBITDA” = post-revenue stage;
- “Growth stage – company has positive EBITDA and is scaling output” = growth stage;
- “Mature stage – company has stabilised at scale and is operating profitably” = no equivalent data (such a category wasn’t included in the GSEN survey)

PROJECTED SUPPORT

We asked members to share their predictions for future demand and supply of their services ('How many social entrepreneurs will apply for support over the next 12 months?', 'How many social entrepreneurs will you support over the next 12 months?'). This data showed that members are unable to meet the current demand for support. Last year on average each organisation received 264 applications from social entrepreneurs; only 25% of these were selected and received support. It also showed that demand for support is set to increase by almost 50% over the next 12 months. Members are responding to this with a planned 78% increase in the total number of social entrepreneurs they support.

The average 25% acceptance rate is considered relatively high compared to what is considered as best practice in mainstream incubation (Baird et al., 2013). This possibly results from a combination of factors: the nascent nature of the sector (especially in developing markets), the relative youth of the support organisations, and their commitment to operate at the beginning of the social venture pipeline, where support for more volume is needed. Further research will be needed to better understand this situation and clearly demonstrate the value of less selective programmes in the early-stage space.

SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOCUSES

Some GSEN members have different portfolios of who they target and in what sector. The three main demographic profiles members are actively and specifically seeking to support in their social initiatives are:²⁰

- Young people aged between 19 and 35 (37%)
- Women (23%)
- Individuals with a low income (23%)

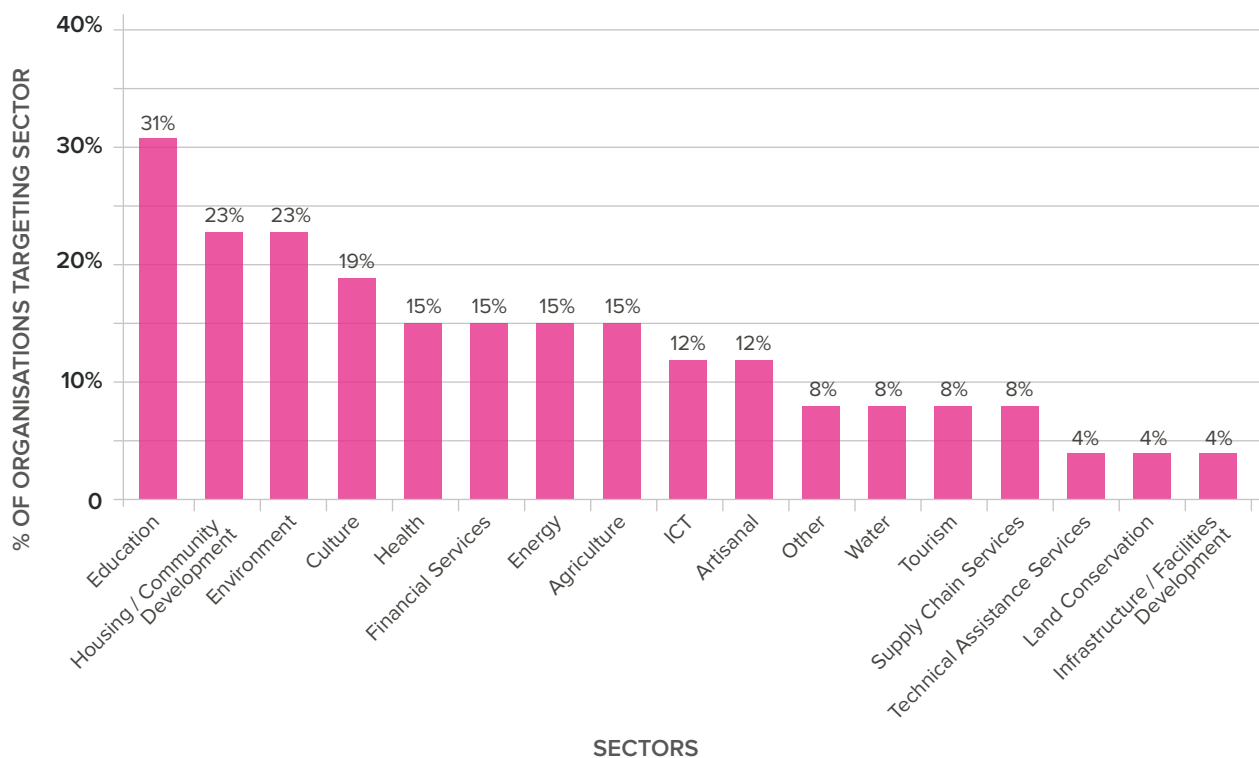
However, nearly half (47%) of members have no specified target group. This inclusive approach is also true of the sectors they are targeting, with 69% having no target sector.

Where they do focus on a sector, members are commonly investing time and money in initiatives working in:²¹

- Education (31%)
- Housing/community development (23%)
- Environment (23%)

²⁰ Percentages do not add up to 100 as some members are targeting multiple groups.

²¹ Percentages do not add up to 100 as some members are targeting multiple sectors.

Figure 8: Sectors targeted by GSEN members (n=9)²²

The proportion of organisations with no target sector is slightly higher than previous studies have indicated (Baird et al., 2013) and is at odds with many mainstream incubator approaches. For example, over the past 10 years there has been a proliferation of tech incubators, providing focused intensive support tailored for the industry. The Omidyar Network believes this approach would also benefit the social impact sector.^{xviii} It argues that by focusing in a particular area, time and resources can be dedicated to influencing policy and building infrastructure, bringing about more sustainable change compared to investing in ventures with a range of social objectives.

This finding can mean one of two things: either that the early-stage support ecosystem in the countries of operations (and globally) is not mature enough for more specialised support and/or sector-specific support; or it can indicate that at the earliest stages, relevant support services for start-up social entrepreneurs is agnostic of specificities, and the needs to strengthen their business model/skills are very similar. Experience from countries such as the UK, where the social entrepreneurship ecosystem can be qualified as relatively mature, tells us that it is almost certainly a mix of those two assumptions. However, more research will be needed to demonstrate what type of support is actually most adapted to early-stage social entrepreneurs, in various contexts.

²² IRIS categories.

CASE STUDIES

YUNUS SOCIAL BUSINESS: GSEN MEMBER PROVIDING SUPPORT IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

Yunus Social Business was born out of the now renowned social business model (“no loss no dividend”) conceptualised 30 years ago in Bangladesh by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus. Yunus Social Business - Global Initiatives (YSB) was co-founded in 2011 to support social entrepreneurs on a global scale. YSB currently works in seven countries, where, through its local country teams, it accelerates and finances early-stage and scaling social businesses, using well-tested methods to enable local entrepreneurs to build solutions from the ground up, and grow social businesses that matter.

YSB provides two levels of services: Entrepreneur Services is a three-month accelerator structured programme, selecting, coaching and mentoring high-potential early-stage entrepreneurs. The Financing programme provides support for more established social businesses through debt or equity, in the form of soft loans and grace periods according to each business' needs, combined with six to eight years of post-investment support.

An example of social business YSB supports is DIGO, the only major manufacturer of domestic cleaning products in Haiti. DIGO works with micro-entrepreneurs to help them increase their income by selling cleaning products to end customers. In 2014 DIGO increased the income of over 100 micro-entrepreneurs in Haiti. Yunus Social Business provided financing for DIGO, both from its direct philanthropic investors and leveraging from co-investors. It also supported the DIGO team through facilitating access to experts in distribution networks and supply chain systems, which were needed to sustainably scale the business.

Yunus Social Business brings many years of experience in incubating and financing ventures in developing and low-mid-income countries, including experience in policy and advocacy work, which it shares with GSEN members:

“GSEN has done a tremendous job in advocating our work and thereby, sharing our experiences. Starting with the GSEN Learning Week, we have had plenty of opportunities to interact with groups of peer organisations and/or individuals. The GSEN team have continuously kept our organisation on the radar and created opportunities for us to share our knowledge in workshops, studies or speeches.”

INSPIRING AND SUPPORTING, UNLTD INDONESIA

UnLtd Indonesia is an example of one of our youngest members. It was founded in 2014 having been inspired by a visit to UnLtd UK as part of a study visit abroad and then receiving knowledge transfer and technical assistance from UnLtd UK. Its reasons for joining GSEN are to learn from other organisations supporting social entrepreneurs to increase programme effectiveness, and to learn how to best build financial sustainability for the organisations it supports. UnLtd Indonesia has joined other regional and national networks to connect with members of the local ecosystem but sees GSEN as a unique opportunity to connect with and learn from its peers.

Since joining GSEN there have already been concrete benefits to its membership beyond best practice exchanges with other GSEN members, including applying for a funding bid:

“GSEN informed us about the opportunity, and then contacted a few members to form a consortium in South Asia. It was easier and natural for GSEN to form a consortium among its members due to commonality and trusted relationships.”

UnLtd Indonesia sees GSEN as directly impacting on its ability to support social entrepreneurs: *“the social entrepreneurs we are supporting could benefit from this kind of effort because they would receive more support through the project developed with other GSEN members.”*

WHAT'S ON OFFER?

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

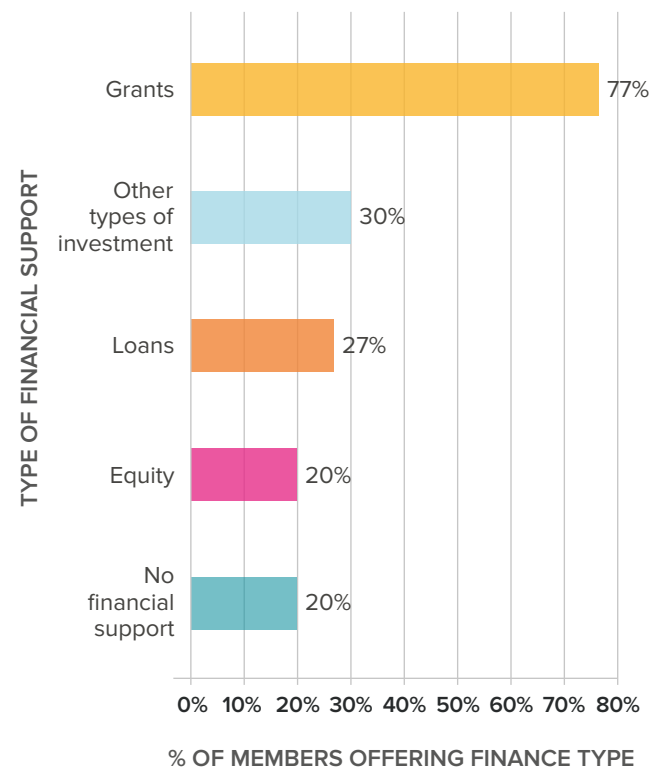
Our survey asked members about the types of financial support they offer to social entrepreneurs (see figure 9), and the financial value of such support. When looking at the differences between the more established and the newer support agencies, it is clear that they are providing support in fundamentally different ways. Younger organisations give a greater proportion of their annual operating budget directly to social entrepreneurs through financial support and work with a broadly similar number of social entrepreneurs as more established larger organisations.²³

In future research, we will examine what other activities larger organisations are spending their resources on, for example by asking them to give estimates (in terms of finance or time) of their non-financial support offers, including policy and research work that supports entrepreneurs indirectly. This would allow for a more thorough and reliable investigation into the relative merits of providing financial and non-financial support to social entrepreneurs.

It is clear from the data that GSEN members are giving out a greater proportion of grants (77%) compared to members of other networks (57% of EVPA members, The EVPA Survey, 2014). This may reflect that seed funding is more important at early stages, whereas ventures at the later stages are in a more robust position to take on investment.

²³ Calculated as value of annual financial support divided by total annual operating budget. The value of grant/investment given to each social entrepreneur was found to be similar for both newer and more established organisations. UnLtd UK data removed here as outlier value.

Figure 9: Types of financial support offered by GSEN organisations (n=30)



COCKTAILS OF NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Members vary hugely in the amount of financial support they provide (from five organisations that provide no financial support through to one organisation providing over \$8 million USD in the past year). However, they are all united in offering a wide range of support options. All members offer multiple services of support, on average supporting eight social entrepreneurs for an average of 13 months. Current data does not allow us to say how many different programmes are provided by members on average. However, we do know that most members have several support programmes on offer (UnLtd in the UK has 17 support programmes) targeting social entrepreneurs at different stages of their ventures

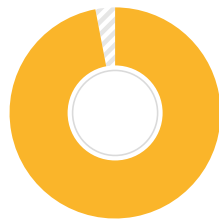
or with specific vertical or thematic focuses. In future research, we will further examine the details of individual support programmes, encouraging members to share key information about each. This report provides aggregate-level information about support programmes within organisations. In the future, we will also look at providing a financial value to non-financial support offered (with consistent value metrics). This could allow more benchmarking, with for instance the calculation of a ratio of financial versus non-financial support per entrepreneur supported (at various stages and compared to impact created).

WHAT'S ON OFFER?

DIRECT SUPPORT TO INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS AND THEIR TEAMS

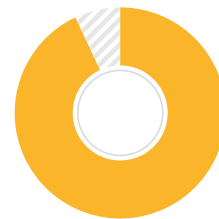
% of members offering service

From the 13 different support options²⁴ listed in the survey, members on average offer eight. The top two methods of support offered involve developing entrepreneurs' skills through mentoring/coaching and training.



97%

Mentoring or coaching



93%

Training



80%

Access to pro-bono services delivered by external partners (e.g. pro-bono legal or financial services)

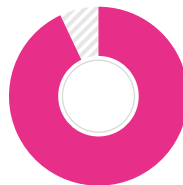


57%

Dedicated programme manager

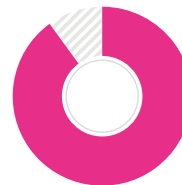
ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Another common category of support is access to networks, facilitating connections between the social entrepreneurs and industry experts, customers, investors and peers.



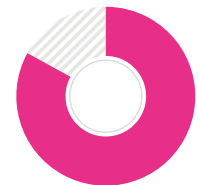
93%

Networking opportunities and connections (e.g. with industry experts or potential customers)



90%

Access and connections to potential investors



83%

Peer-to-peer learning opportunities (e.g. peer networks, or events with other social entrepreneurs)

SPECIFIC RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Physical space and online resources are provided by some organisations to help social entrepreneurs grow their initiatives, along with specific resources including media exposure, support with impact measurement, or research and development support (e.g. market research, product design, and technology-related development).



73%

Press or media exposure



63%

Impact measurement support



60%

Online tools and resources (e.g. online toolkits or e-learning)



40%

Physical space/desk space



23%

Research and Development

²⁴ Including 'Other'

DATA AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

CONSENSUS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Ninety per cent of members reported that they collect social impact data, which demonstrates an appetite for impact measurement. There was also consensus across members on what the important measures were. Namely, they prioritise the following three key metrics:

- job creation – a priority for 53% of members,
- beneficiary outcomes (including but not limited to number of beneficiaries) – a priority for 47%,
- and the financial health of the venture – a priority for 42%.

DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

We are not the first to note the lack of social impact data collected by supporters of social entrepreneurs.^{xix} In this report, social impact analysis is limited by the small number of organisations able to comprehensively report their social impact. Although 90% of members reported that they collect social impact data,

- only 29% were able to provide the number of beneficiaries their social entrepreneurs targeted in the past year,
- and 30% were able to report the number of jobs created since they started supporting social entrepreneurs.

This can mean that organisations focus on delivering the core of their missions and might see data collection as an additional task for which they have little capacity or resources left.

When asked how many beneficiaries their social entrepreneurs had targeted in the past year, 71% answered 'I don't know', rising to 75% when asked for data since their foundation. For jobs created by their social entrepreneurs over the past year, 59% said they did not know, rising to 70% who couldn't report this aggregate data since their foundation.

90%

of members collect social impact data

12 months

on average data is collected for a further 12 months after completion of the programme by the entrepreneur

DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

Early research shows a varied approach to collection, both in terms of regularity and methodology. Twenty-three per cent collect data on a monthly basis, 23% on an annual basis and 18% every three months (n=22). On average they then continue to collect the data for a further 12 months after completion of the programme by the entrepreneur.

Of the 22 members who gave further details of their methods, the majority collect social impact data through direct communication, whether this is via meetings, phone calls, or emails. A smaller subset sends out surveys to collate key metric information and a similar number of members are using reporting templates or dashboards. It seems there would be benefits for a shared simple metrics system and data collection system. Data could then be collected consistently across all organisations, allowing for more evidence and benchmarks.

NEED FOR MORE DATA AND EVIDENCE

Getting such a detailed review of the type of non-financial support available to social entrepreneurs at the early stage is unique. This gives an idea of the scope of activity happening across the ecosystem of support worldwide, the types of support on offer and potential gaps (e.g. impact measurement support). This data is a good indicator of the magnitude of the ecosystem, but does not tell us everything we would like to know. There is more to be explored around the detailed types of activities within each category, their frequency and their impact. For instance, does the low percentage of members offering desk space signify a lack of supply or demand? Or does it imply that such a service is only valuable for a certain type of social entrepreneur?

We hope that this will trigger further conversations, interest and research around the impact of each support offer and their combinations, their impact on different types of social entrepreneur, at different stages of their journey and within different economic contexts. We would like to work with other initiatives undertaking similar data collection and research projects to align the way in which these items are measured around the world, across networks and organisations.²⁵

²⁵ Initial conversations with other networks on how this would be possible have already been started.

NETWORKS

PARTNERSHIPS ARE IN OUR DNA

GSEN members bring with them a range of partnerships. We define partnerships as two or more organisations working together towards a formally agreed outcome. The 34 surveyed members were asked to name their top three formal partners and outline their respective role in supporting social entrepreneurs. The results reveal a huge diversity of partners, including:

- grant-making foundations,
- governmental organisations/departments,
- private companies,
- universities,
- individuals.

Investing companies were not generally cited as part of the top three formal partners. This might seem surprising, as investors are key components in the social entrepreneurship value chain. However, according to other sources (I-DEV, 2014), only around 30% of early-stage impact investors tend to formally partner with an incubator or accelerator. 60% of investors would rather develop informal partnerships with accelerators (Baird et al., 2013). Further exploration will be needed to better understand the reasons for this situation.

Of these named partners the majority provide:

- financial assistance (82% of partners),
- or pro-bono/in-kind support (25% of partners) advising both the supporter organisation themselves and their entrepreneurs.

Other contributions include:

- help with communications,
- networking,
- marketing,
- event space,
- and the co-design and running of programmes.

Of the 72 partners named there were only four repeats (partners shared by more than one GSEN member, such as the European Commission), revealing the diversity of the network. This is positive in terms of the sustainability of the network: distributed and very local partnerships reduce the vulnerability of the network to change and create relevance rooted in the local needs and context.

THE POWER OF A GLOBAL NETWORK

Seventy per cent of members are working locally in their founding country only. They are the local, and often the only, go-to experts for early-stage social entrepreneurship in their respective countries. This highlights the benefits of being part of a common network, where GSEN can help each member harness the potential for further international collaboration and synergies between the respective partners of GSEN members. This positive role is reflected in the survey data which highlights the benefits of a network in empowering members with knowledge and connections.

The three main reasons members gave for joining GSEN:

- 96% wanted to share and learn with other organisations doing similar things (73% very important, 23% important)
- 77% wanted opportunities to work with other organisations nationally, regionally and/or internationally (very important 57%, important 20%)
- 90% valued access to tools and resources (40% very important, 50% important)

Members were also asked what benefits they had experienced since joining GSEN.²⁶ Similar to their reasons for joining, the benefits they identified centred on learning and making connections:

- 88% had reported creating relevant connections with peers thanks to GSEN
- 75% had reported learning something useful by attending GSEN activities (online or offline)
- 56% had connected with potential partner(s) thanks to GSEN

This data illustrates that GSEN is delivering on its key objectives: creating connections and sharing learning.

²⁶ Analysis only includes those who had been a member for three months or more.



We are a growing profession/community of practice, and our capability and effectiveness is increased by being connected.

Akina Foundation, New Zealand, founded 2008



GSEN has allowed us to share knowledge and connect in multiple ways. We have been part of the GSEN Learning Week in January 2015, which gave us the opportunity to connect with peer organisations, exchange lessons learned and simply build friendships with people that share our mission. We have also been able to tap the GSEN network to organise events relevant to our core business and engage organisations that we previously did not have any connection with. And last but not least, GSEN has introduced us to interesting partners that now help us scale our impact and reach out to more and more people.

Yunus Social Business, founded 2011



05

CONCLUSION

GSEN, SOLUTIONS FOR A GROWING INDUSTRY

Early-stage social entrepreneurship is creating grassroots change in communities across the world. It is a fundamental stage in the journey of every social venture and yet is under-resourced and under-researched.

This report set out to leverage GSEN's network of early-stage supporters to shed light on the types of organisations providing this service and the opportunities and challenges they experience.

CULTIVATING DIVERSITY AS AN ASSET

We found that there is no 'one type' of supporter. GSEN's network is diverse in terms of organisational capacity and experience. The existence of such diversity is exciting. It is an opportunity to tap into a range of perspectives and knowledge brought by agencies of varied backgrounds and experience. It also allows for follow-up research to uncover the details and value of alternative support offers, with the opportunity to better understand what works, why and where.

SHARED VALUES AND COMMON AGENDAS

- In less than two years, 52 organisations joined GSEN, a new value-based initiative aimed at bringing together supporters of early-stage social entrepreneurs. The rapidity at which GSEN expanded its membership may be surprising; however, it is a natural result of organisations motivated by shared values and goals, sharing many similarities, despite their differences.
- The organisations are diverse but there are some over-arching themes in the types of support on offer. All but five organisations offer financial support alongside non-financial support, the majority of which is focused on equipping social entrepreneurs with the skills and capabilities necessary to run a successful venture. For 88% of organisations this involves providing either mentoring or coaching. Members offer on average eight services of support, for an average length of 13 months.

RESPONDING TO THE DEMAND FOR SUPPORT

- The data shows that support for early-stage social entrepreneurs is massively under-resourced. Tens of millions of social entrepreneurs are starting up every year, but we are collectively only supporting a few thousand. GSEN members are responsive to this demand: they plan to increase the number of social entrepreneurs they reach this year by 78%. This is a first way for supporters to acknowledge the need to do more with possibly similar resources available, making current services even more streamlined and efficient to accept more applicants.
- With the expected increase in demand for support (+46% projected) next year, demand will still hugely outstrip supply. It is only if we all work towards solutions for this situation that we will be able to create social change at scale.

FOSTERING AND SPOTTING INNOVATION

Several members are experimenting with innovative models of support. For instance, they test success-based models that allow entrepreneurs to start their venture without a financial burden, or support ventures whose mission is to support other social entrepreneurs. Thanks to our close relations with those members and their activities, we identify innovative models; encourage cross-fertilisation and their dissemination across the world. The social entrepreneurs supported by the network members also have a greater opportunity to share their innovations thanks to GSEN and its members. By sharing what we believe is innovative; we hope to inspire other innovations.

CREATING MORE VALUE FOR MONEY

To meet the demand for support and build better quality pipelines of social entrepreneurs, we need to increase “value for money”: creating more social impact with the financial resources currently available in the early-stage social entrepreneurship space. More cross-pollination, streamlining and potentially more standardisation (through commonly agreed upon, yet context-specific, quality standards) will help organisations become more efficient. This is how we believe we could create more impact with the current resources. Concretely, the outcomes would be that more social entrepreneurs are supported, that more ventures have better survival rates and/or better growth, which in turn would create more employment and social impact. As a global network, we are working towards that goal.

INCREASING SUPPORTER SUSTAINABILITY

At GSEN we acknowledge that there is further work to be done on the subject of sustainability and have several working hypotheses we will be testing in the coming years in collaboration with our members:

1. Directing philanthropic support where it is most essential:

We believe that there is an unhealthy pressure on support organisations to become self-sustaining (sometimes self-imposed). Philanthropic backing is probably always going to be part of the sustainability equation for early-stage social entrepreneur supporters. They are unlikely to generate significant income directly from early-stage social entrepreneurs without compromising their social mission. Indeed, it is perhaps feasible to create balanced or profitable models of support for those who are usually urban, already skilled and well-networked individuals with a track record of entrepreneurship. However, to support those individuals who have an amazing idea to change the world, but lack the support, connections and business acumen to transform it into a successful, impactful venture, we need to go the extra mile. Philanthropic support is also essential if supporters are to reach outside of the dynamic city centres where (social) entrepreneurship support tends to be concentrated, or to reach social entrepreneurs of otherwise underserved social groups.

2. Increase income-generating activities:

In the meantime, we need to increase income from revenue-generating activities (in a way that is not detrimental to the core mission of a support organisation) to reduce the proportion of philanthropic support (currently representing an average of 75% of members' income). New creative sustainability models need to be designed with and for support organisations, tested, piloted and implemented at large scale if they work and create impact (e.g. cross-subsidisation models, micro-insurance, payment for results, endowment funds). Some great examples can already be found within the network where members are experimenting with new business models (e.g. replicating their organisation, delivering "low-cost" support models) to overcome resource limitations.

FROM SUCCESS STORIES TO QUALITY STANDARDS

Defining and aligning the way we measure our social impact as support organisations in comparable and transparent ways is going to be a crucial stepping stone for the sector. It will help us move away from contextual or anecdotal success stories, to evidence-based best practices, creating the foundations of quality standards shared by the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. It all starts with collecting data in a comparable way. GSEN members have agreed to create a common metrics system. This is an ambitious project that will need commitment in terms of time and funding. Yet the benefits of such a system are potentially colossal. By enabling organisations to provide data in a consistent way, it will not only be possible to track individual support organisations' progress but also provide evidence to back best practices. This is what will transform success stories into quality standards that can be widely shared and disseminated.

A CALL TO ACTION

GSEN is a backbone organisation^{xx} that gathers organisations around a shared vision: a world where people find it easy to get support to start and thrive as social entrepreneurs, wherever they are. It is fostering trust-based relations, encouraging organisations to share learning and work together on co-designed projects. GSEN focuses on increasing the reach, quality and sustainability of support for early-stage social entrepreneurs, thereby fostering a more robust social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Ultimately, GSEN seeks to improve social outcomes by bringing partners to transform a fragmented system into a powerful tool to scale up social change. We believe therefore in the power of joining forces with other organisations in order to accelerate change and help the ecosystem to mature.

Here are a few ideas of actions for players in the ecosystem that have emerged from this report:

FOR PHILANTHROPIC ORGANISATIONS AND FUNDERS

This report demonstrates that the amount of resources currently available for early-stage social entrepreneurship needs to grow if we want more – and more accessible – support for start-up social entrepreneurs. It also shows that more data and research are needed to accelerate the development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem and truly unleash its impact potential. **Funders should consider:**

Channelling more financial resources to early-stage social entrepreneurship support

- to enable current supporters to become more impactful and more sustainable
- to support new organisations (e.g. mainstream business support organisations) to start support programmes adapted to early-stage social entrepreneurs

Providing additional support, resources and incentives

- to encourage supporters to measure their impact
- to incentivise collaboration among organisations and networks around systemically shared metrics, data collection processes, and the development of quality standards

FOR IMPACT INVESTORS AND LATER STAGE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Early-stage supporters play an important role in generating the volume of quality start-up ventures for the pipeline. Today, they nurture ventures which in five years (or less) can become good investment candidates, or fellows for programmes offered at later stages by organisations such as the Schwab Foundation, the Skoll Foundation, or Ashoka.

Both impact investors and later stage support organisations could:

More generally recognise that this process takes time and that early-stage supporters play an important role in it

- to provide funders with a more representative picture of the social entrepreneurship value chain
- to contribute to more realistic expectations about what social entrepreneurs can achieve in the short and long term

Besides, impact investors could:

Collaborate more closely with early-stage social entrepreneur support organisations

- to allow for a better mutual understanding of needs. For instance, support organisations could better prepare ventures to get investment ready and meet the investors' needs as a result of such collaboration. Conversely, more impact investors could adapt their investment approaches to the early-stage space, where needs are high but still underserved
- to enable the emergence and dissemination of innovation and new products and services closely adapted to the specificities of early stage ventures

FOR DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS

Increasingly, development agencies are investing in innovation funds and the supply of impact investment. However, they are also faced with a lack of investment-ready social ventures that can absorb these funds and deliver innovation at scale. They are starting to recognise the need to strengthen the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in order to generate the volume of social ventures operating and creating impact at scale.

Development agencies could follow the recommendations provided by the Taskforce on Social Impact Investment established under the UK's presidency of the G8, in its International Development Subject Paper (2014), and:

Invest in the development of the early-stage social entrepreneurship ecosystem

- to strengthen the foundations of a high-impact social entrepreneurship ecosystem
- to improve the scale at which social entrepreneurs create impact

Explicitly link donors' work on the supply of social impact investment with their existing work on small business and private sector development, rather than treating these policy areas in isolation

- to create more synergies between programmes which try to achieve similar goals
- to allow best practices to permeate different areas of expertise

Establish social entrepreneurship as a key topic addressed by the Donor Committee on Enterprise Development

- to leverage the power of such a forum supporting poverty reduction, economic opportunity and self-reliance through private sector development
 - to advance and disseminate knowledge about social entrepreneurship support between donors, development agencies and field programmes
-

FOR EARLY STAGE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS AND OTHERS IN THE ECOSYSTEM

In just two years GSEN has achieved substantial results, creating and growing a network of early stage social entrepreneur supporters across the world. The existence of this network has led to successful funding bids, fruitful introductions and shared knowledge and understanding. We are constantly seeking out talented organisations working to support social entrepreneurs that are interested in connecting with others.

Early stage support organisations could:

Connect with GSEN, GSEN members or other peers and peer-networks

- to contribute to a stronger and more integrated ecosystem
- to share learning and impact data to advance knowledge in the early stage social entrepreneurship space

We also know that there are limits to what we can do, even as a global network. We are therefore keen to exploring collaborations with other networks and organisations, which will lead to a stronger social entrepreneurship ecosystem. We believe that partnerships are key to changing the world.

Others in the ecosystem who share our vision and values could:

Connect with us and our members

- to explore how we could collaborate to achieve common goals faster
- to help more social entrepreneurs go from seed to impact



GSEN addresses an important need to build capacity in early-stage support for social entrepreneurs and to learn from each other and share what works in this space. I am pleased that the Cabinet Office was able to support this ambitious programme in 2013. GSEN has achieved impressive things in its first year; with almost forty members from over twenty-five countries, helping its members to be more efficient, innovative and to enable more social entrepreneurs to start up and grow. I would like to congratulate GSEN on its progress over the past year and I wish them every success in its future work to grow a thriving ecosystem and meaningful community of social good.

Nick Hurd, former Minister for Civil Society, UK



I am supporting GSEN due to my long personal relationship with UnLtd and my strong belief that there absolutely needs to be more done to stimulate social entrepreneurship initiatives, and this needs to go far beyond competitions and awards. What is needed, are dedicated organisations that identify and provide both financial and human capital to support new social entrepreneurs. GSEN is being organised to promote a network of such organisations. I regard this effort as complementary to what EVPA and AVPN are doing in terms of mobilising financial, human and intellectual capital.

Doug Miller, founding chairman and honorary president of the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) and chairman of the board of the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN)



There are many fabulous and successful social entrepreneurs today in the world, who achieve tremendous social impact. Such are the Skoll Awardees. However, we need more of them. GSEN is addressing this.

Dr. Pamela Hartigan, Director of the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, University of Oxford

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UNLTD UK

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YUNUS SOCIAL BUSINESS

*Did not provide data, but contributed to the report.

These organisations operate in the following countries:

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