

Transform World South East Asia Regional Thrust

A colourfully diverse region of 11 countries with a myriad of cultures, tastes, peoples, religions and pace of development, Southeast Asia consists of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

With a population of more than 620×10^6 speaking 3,800 languages where only 40% have been reached by the gospel and nearly a third are under the age of 15, it houses adherents of the world's major religions and ideologies with 100×10^6 Communists, 130×10^6 Christians, 160×10^6 Buddhists and 220×10^6 Muslims.

Many modern megacities /urban centers with technologically advanced societies exist alongside thousands of traditional, tribal ethnic groups living in rural subsistence villages in this region of contrasting disparities where the gap between the rich and poor is continuing to become wider.

In this contemporary and postmodern context of rapid change, progress and innovation, it is critical to address the following four major crises in culture or root issues based on Isa 58:12 – identity, integrity, intimacy & influence crisis, all of which give rise to the seven challenges across Southeast Asia. To face and rise above these crises and 7 challenges through the various spheres of influence as detailed below, we hope to stand together to be:

- Rebuilders of God-given Vision
- Raisers of God-given Values
- Repairers of God-given Virtues
- Restorers of God-given Vineyards

I. IDEOLOGICAL

Four ideologies are prevalent among the nations of Southeast Asia: Buddhism, Communism (Laos, Vietnam), Christianity and Islam with the last being the most pervasive.

Islam was introduced to parts of Maritime Southeast Asia by Muslim traders and Sufis leaving adherents in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Thailand, South of Philippines, Singapore and Brunei. Since the late 1970s, an Islamic resurgence has taken place in the region.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Awareness & Education of the National Church** in Every Nation to Face this Challenge especially Islam
2. **Understanding the Muslim Agenda** (also Buddhist & Communist ones)
3. **Building Bridges** to Muslims (also Buddhists & Communists)
4. **Strategizing creative ways to reach out through Education** eg schools & pre-schools with wholesome values based on the Bible.
5. **Networking and Collaboration of Churches & Christian Organizations to carry out 1) to 4)**
6. **Working with Muslim groups on common societal issues** (building blocks of and threats) eg homosexuality agendas, etc
7. **Preparing & equipping the next generation** to face this challenge.
8. **Adopt Global Peacemakers (GPS) in every SEA nation to promote bridging relationships between believers and pre-believers** beginning with Muslims (also Buddhists ,Communists, etc) through creating awareness via media, literature and conferences starting with Indonesia & Philippines.

2. FAMILY

With the accelerating pace of growth in the industrialization and modernization of Southeast Asia, new trends are affecting Southeast Asia's basic family structures. Fertility rates are decreasing. LGBT cries for validation are increasing. Populations are aging. There is a rise in the divorce rates, increase in female-headed and single-parent households, smaller families with a heavier burden on caregivers, and increasing mobility due to labour migration.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Building Faith-Based Discipleship In the Homes with Parents as Primary Disciple-Makers**
2. **Mobilizing Senior Leadership of Churches to Prioritize Building Faith Focused Families**
3. **Building foundations for, Strengthening & Restoring Marriages**
4. **Pastoral Care & Ministry for Family Members affected by Divorce**
5. **Preparing for & Empowering Families to Engage with Sexuality/ Gender Identity/ LGBTQ Issues**
6. **Creatively Strategizing how to overcome the 'Absentee Father' Issue and the Role of the Father in the Family.**
7. **Migrant worker family support** through pre-departure training, support of family members after their loved one has gone to the field, structure to deal with migrant worker issues especially financial ones in host country and host country church support.

3. ORPHANS

By absolute number of orphans, Indonesia is number 6 of the top 10 countries of orphans in the world with 4.7 million orphans. In Southeast Asia, many children have become orphans by disease (TB, 500.000 deaths in 2010 in SOUTH EAST ASIA), violence/war (Vietnam war, 900.000 orphans), natural disasters (Tsunami Aceh Dec 2004, more than 2400 orphans in Aceh), poverty, and famine. Millions of children are left without parents or guardians, and have become street children where they must fend for themselves. They are very vulnerable to human trafficking.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Data Collection of Orphan Status in each SEA nation**
2. **Create awareness** of status, plight and needs of orphans in churches, theological institutions, NGOs, educational and business sectors **through** various means especially **media, organization of 'Orphan Day', etc.**
3. **Present opportunities** for individuals from **various spheres to be involved** in meeting the needs of and adopting orphans.
4. **Orphanages and Foster Homes:** While these may be necessary, work to make them short-term and transitional, with these being organized along family groups and in the long term, pushing for guardianship or adoption.
5. **Promotion of "Adoption Law" & initiate a national movement** to adopt orphans.
6. **Capacity building for small orphanages** through training & networking with other related ministries.

4. POVERTY

Although economic growth among Southeast Asian countries looks encouraging in the last two decades, averaging 5% growth per year, according to the World Bank, with those living under poverty line declining, poverty in general persists and is still a major issue in the region with all its consequences in form of human suffering, low human development, poor health, orphan concerns, etc. For example in 2008 the percentages of those living on less than \$2 a day were as follows: Laos 66%, Indonesia 54%, Cambodia 53%, Vietnam 43%, Philippines 41%.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Address the mindset of the poor for transformation through consultation and training in each of the countries**
2. **Provide self development and/or advancement opportunities through community development, CHE, Micro-finance training, etc**
3. **Improve life/vocation skill management** of the community through small business training, etc.
4. **Have a directory/ database of resources & NGOs in SEA working to alleviate poverty** as well as to systematically update database to keep it current.
5. **Consultation of SEA Poverty leaders** to energize practical poverty alleviation through paradigm shift of the poor from object to subject beginning with Indonesia & Philippines.

5. JUSTICE

Southeast Asia is one of the world's top destinations for people seeking sex with children... Hundreds of thousands of girls and boys are believed to be working in the sex trade in the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and other countries in an underground industry that inflicts untold emotional and physical harm on young lives. (Mar 25, 2006; Humantrafficking.org)

The trafficking of women and children for prostitution and forced labor in and from Southeast Asia is a lucrative and well-organized "growth industry" in the region. Southeast Asia accounts for about a third of the estimated 700,000 annual victims, most of whom are trafficked within Asia and about 25,000-35,000 of the trafficked Asians enter North America. (Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia, by Teresa Kok Malaysian Parliamentarian, Mar 10-11, 2007)

With respect to freedom of religion, six Southeast Asian countries (Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia & Indonesia) are in the World Watch List 2014, a list that ranks the 50 countries where persecution of Christians is most severe:

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Mobilize prayer and create awareness of unjust practices in each of the nations.**
2. **Network churches & organizations to collaborate to work towards mitigating or eradicating specific unjust practices** (eg unfair practices, discrimination, trafficking, abortion, etc) in their nations & also regionally
3. Preventing **human trafficking** & ministering to those already affected especially children and women.

6. CHRIST'S MISSIONAL

According to the Joshua Project, the eleven countries of Southeast Asia are composed of 1,810 peoples, of which 745 peoples, i.e. 41.2% of Southeast Asia population are unreached. This unreached Southeast Asia's population numbers 306,067,000 people. The Southeast Asia UPGs can be grouped into two Major Groups: The Buddhist/Animist Group and the Muslim/Animist Group. SEALINK helps facilitate the mobilization of missions & church planting efforts across the region over the past decade especially that of unreached people groups.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

Reaching out to Muslims, Buddhist and UPGs by doing the following:

1. **Prioritizing building Unity among churches & organizations in every nation** with regards missional purpose of church planting and growing Christ followers through relational emphasis, vision casting, empowering seminars and regional prayer gatherings.
2. **Training & empowering** of Bible college students, Christian leadership, missionaries-evangelists-pastors in each of the SEA nations, **both local and global.**
3. **Mobilization of mission workers by sharing of opportunities and facilitating placement through SEALINK & national missions representatives.**
4. **Developing & Promoting Missional Discipleship** through appropriate resources, training, conferences, mentoring, coaching, mission trips, etc.
5. **Preparing the Next generation** to be aware of the missional call and opportunities **through creative and contemporary approaches.**
6. **Facilitating Poverty Alleviation and livelihood opportunities** by working with the Poverty challenge, Business & Education spheres.
7. **Using Educational Measures** (Pre-schools, Universities, e-learning centres) **to reach out to and cultivate Scriptural values in pre-believing society.**
8. **Training to set up pre-schools/ early childhood programmes** as a launching pad for church planting

7. CELEBRATION

Praise God that in facing the overwhelming challenges in Southeast Asian nations, the Lord has raised Prayer Networks in all the eleven South East Asian nations, beginning in 2003. The South East Asia Prayer Council (SOUTHEAST ASIAPC) is the SOUTHEAST ASIA regional prayer network related to the Global Network of the International Prayer Council which sponsored the World Prayer Assembly in May 2012 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Strategies to Face Challenge:

1. **Encourage relational strength** in and between houses of prayer in **collaboration with SEA Prayer Council (SEAPC)**
2. **Develop a "core" team for SEA** for the Celebration Challenge focus on building and connecting houses of prayer that will help connect within SEA and with other regions of the world.
- 3, **Engage Youth** through encouraging youth input and participation in the prayer efforts in church, region, or ministry and houses of prayer
- 4..**Establish & strengthen gatherings already in place** such as prayer breakfasts, in malls, sporting events to be a means to relay vision and encourage participation.
- 5 **Equipping and training** through media especially for children's worship/prayer as well
6. Maintaining and sustaining houses of prayer/ prayer towers.