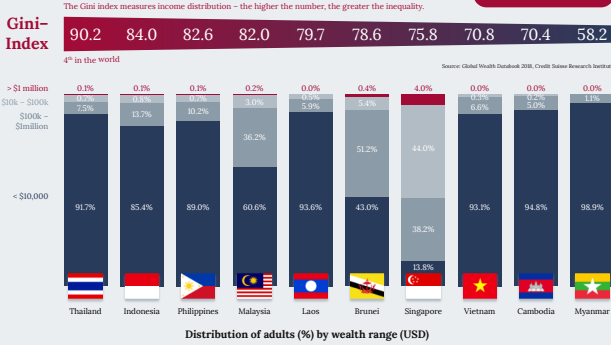


The Role of Technology in Social (In)equality

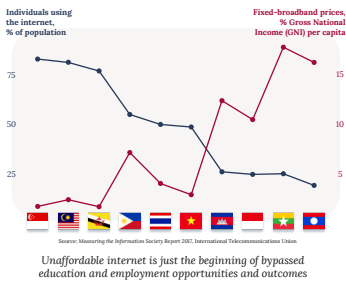
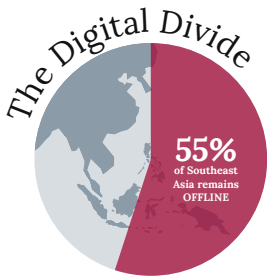


According to the [UNESCAP Asia and The Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020](#), Southeast Asia is experiencing widening inequalities, regressing from Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (reduced inequalities).

>80% of adults in 70% of Southeast Asian countries have less than US\$10,000



As the world's digital economy grows, access to—and the lack of—technology and connectivity becomes a driving force for unequal opportunities and outcomes.



COVID-19 further highlights the digital divide with schools moving towards online learning, and the health information gap with offline communities.

There've been attempts to bridge social gaps through tech social businesses

When tech businesses have a clear focus on sustainability and inclusivity, tech has a massive potential to close various social gaps.

Social impact tech businesses

- Infrastructure & Connectivity: Saora INDUSTRIES, SocialLight Inc, billionBRICKS
- Employment & Livelihood: ricult, ImpactTerra, mapan, HAPINYOY
- Education & literacy: open door policy, enablecodes3, GENERATION GIRL, KOOMPI
- Financial inclusion: MyCash Online, socialgiver, amantha
- Quality healthcare: YONAH, OOCQ, halodoc

And governments are helping to close the digital gap



Social Enterprise Act

Provides incentives and tax breaks to social impact businesses



SKILLSfuture SG

Provides training credits, encouraging upgrading in digital skills and employability



Inclusive Business Accreditation System

Provides tax incentives to businesses that help low-income communities

“At the end of the day, technological advances necessarily change power structures—knowledge is power—but if there is a lack of check-and-balance, the widening gap of ‘power inequality’ naturally leads to income and wealth inequality.”

— Wen-Tai Hsu, Associate Professor from the School of Economics at Singapore Management University

Yet, gaps remain in the fight against inequality and the digital divide

Not enough businesses consider the social aspect—their profit drivenness could negate the social impact of social businesses

On the foundational level, access to tech infrastructure and digital literacy is basic in closing the inequality gap

“The biggest innovation that could mitigate tech-driven inequality happens when businesses ingrain social purpose and inclusion into the heart of their business models alongside profit objectives.”

— Jonathan Wong, Chief of Technology and Innovation at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Ultimately, businesses and governments need to **work hand in hand** to seize the huge potential technology can bring to growing overall wealth and equality.

01

Improve the availability and access to tech infrastructure

02

Encourage relevant digital skills training and development

03

Implement inclusive, social impact-driven initiatives

