THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, School of Design
Submission title or project name	Soil Trust: Co-producing Local Soil-to-Soil Food Economies
Nominee / key personnel	Markus Wernli (principal investigator, eco-social design); Shing Wai Ng (co-investigator, farm manager); Kam Fai Chan (co-investigator, eco-social design); Sin Ting Lam (assistant farm manager); Josh Shui Wah Wolper (documentation and social media); Peggy Chan (eco-hospitality corporate sponsor); Lin-Cheung Yuen (farmer, Hong Miu Organic Farm); Ruth Kwong (Ethnic Minority Service Center, Yuen Long Townhall)
URL	https://dnda.design/project/y24-0cge9jnq5wilp03/
Submission	This industry-community alliance between a local farm, hotel, welfare centre, eco-hospitality foundation, food retailer and university is experimenting with eco-social agricultural formats to engage diverse, intergenerational populations in land-care practices. To sustain its regenerative farm operation, the Soil Trust developed the Growers Without Borders service-learning programme. In this programme, ethnic minority mothers, undergraduate design students, and Locavore families committed to weekly farm work in return for access to arable land, harvest, upskilling and companionship. This eco-social format allowed the implementation of soil-bound nutrient cycling of kitchen scraps from a downtown hotel that sponsored the operation. Through this intersectoral action, hotel staff, agriculturalists, volunteers and design students invested their time and resources towards the unifying purpose of promoting local soil health, fertiliser self-sufficiency, greenhouse gas reduction and quality food access to the underprivileged, thereby enacting concrete forms of urban/rural co-development in daily life.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	Mahidol University
Submission title or project name	Preventing Pre-term Birth in Thailand: A National Policy Shift
Nominee / key personnel	Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital: Associate Professor Saifon Chawanpaiboon; Clinical Professor Vitaya Titapant; Associate Professor Sanitra Anuwutnavin; Miss Julaporn Pooliam Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities: Dr Attapol Kanjanapongporn
URL	https://doi.org/10.1007/s00404-021-06045-3 https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11071039
Submission	Pre-term birth, affecting 11.6% of pregnancies in Thailand, leads to significant neonatal complications and healthcare costs. Our research identified three key prevention methods: cervical length measurement; progesterone therapy; and cervical cerclage. However, barriers such as scepticism from healthcare providers and lack of free progesterone limited their adoption. In response, our research influenced national policy, leading to the integration of pre-term birth prevention guidelines into Thailand's healthcare system in May 2023. Additionally, progesterone was added to the National List of Essential Medicines, ensuring free access for at-risk women. We also spearheaded training programmes for healthcare professionals and implemented a "sandbox model" at Siriraj Hospital to ensure routine cervical length screening. These efforts align with UN Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to Thailand's mission to reduce neonatal mortality. Our work represents a significant step in improving maternal and child health through sustainable policy and healthcare practice changes.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	City University of Hong Kong
Submission title or project name	Venture Beyond Boundaries: Innovation Programme and Entrepreneurial Education at CityUHK
Nominee / key personnel	Office of the Senior Vice-President (Innovation and Enterprise)
URL	https://www.cityu.edu.hk/svie/
Submission	CityUHK is dedicated to nurturing young entrepreneurs and tech talent, as well as transforming research into practical solutions that benefit society. Through the HK Tech 300 programme, launched in 2021, and the Academy of Innovation, established in 2024, CityUHK provides comprehensive mentorship, funding and educational resources. Since its inception, HK Tech 300 has incubated over 880 start-up projects. These start-ups are making a positive global impact and have developed innovative solutions in areas including healthcare, sustainability and AI, to drive impactful advancements across industries. In 2022, CityUHK launched the HK Tech 300 National Start-up Competition collaborating with a dozen mainland cities. In 2023, the Southeast Asia Start-up Competition was launched, partnering with 11 universities and incubators in the region to promote technology transfer and cross-cultural collaboration. CityUHK's innovation programmes play a vital role in fostering a holistic ecosystem, driving regional development and promoting innovation in Asia.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	Walailak University
Submission title or project name	The restoration of Blue Swimming Crab population: Fishery Improvement Towards Good Aquatic Stewardship Practices
Nominee / key personnel	Assistant Professor Dr Amonsak Sawusdee, Director of the Centre for Academic Services
URL	https://cas.wu.ac.th/sdgs/case-studies
Submission	Nowadays, Thai marine fishery resources, especially the Blue Swimming Crab (BSC), have become depleted due to high fishing pressure and ineffective management strategies. Based on needs assessment surveys and requests from stakeholders in the BSC fishery, particularly the fishermen themselves, Walailak University (WU) launched a research project called “Crab Bank” to improve BSC stock and fisheries in the two main shared aquatic ecosystems in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani provinces. After seven years of implementation (2018-24), the FIP has been upgraded to an A-level rating. Local fishermen increased their crab catches from 5 kg per boat per day to 15 kg per boat per day. This project has played a pivotal role in encouraging fishermen to recognise their stewardship of coastal resources by avoiding the capture of immature animals, refraining from using illegal fishing gear, and organising various sustainability-led activities, such as fish habitat creation and nursery ground protection.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	Hanyang University
Submission title or project name	Building the Future: The Robot City Ansan Initiative
Nominee / key personnel	Shared Robotics Education Centre
URL	https://share.hanyang.ac.kr
Submission	Area-based development is at the core of the Robot City Ansan initiative, a pioneering collaboration between Hanyang University ERICA, Ansan City and industry leaders. This project aims to transform Ansan into South Korea's premier robotics hub, fostering economic growth and innovation through strategic partnerships. The initiative integrates a cutting-edge intelligent robotics testbed with comprehensive workforce training programmes, designed to meet the growing demand for highly skilled professionals in the robotics and automation sectors. The project consists of three phases: • The Center for AI-Robotics Education (CARE) • The Robot AI Tech Integrated Cluster (RAITIC) • The Ansan Science Valley (ASV) Free Economic Zone These phases operate at the university, regional and national levels to drive regional development initiatives. In September 2024, central and local government jointly provided KRW 25.9 billion (US$19 million) for the project to build a Centre for AI-Robotics Education, to improve the region's economic prospects.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	Shiv Nadar University
Submission title or project name	SHIKSHA Plus – Adult Literacy Programme
Nominee / key personnel	Mr Mayank Sinha; Mr Robin Sarkar
URL	
Submission	The SHIKSHA Initiative, launched in 2012, aimed to improve education in government primary schools in Uttar Pradesh. Soon, it became clear that parents could not engage with their children's education, highlighting a need for adult literacy. The SHIKSHA team researched and found that existing programmes took eight months to make adults literate. Recognising adults' shorter attention spans, they developed SHIKSHA Plus to teach in just 90 days using digital versions of Nai_Kiran textbooks. Key activities include selecting blocks and villages, training volunteers and raising literacy awareness. Volunteers identify non-literate learners via the Drishti app and provide essential learning kits. A 90-day teaching plan with regular assessments ensures effective learning. The programme significantly increased literacy rates, with women's literacy rising from 4% to 80% and men's from 5% to 80%. The programme has made over 111,000 learners literate by FY2023-24, and also been extended to 16 jails, making 1,700 inmates literate. Community libraries offer continuing learning opportunities.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	IPB University
Submission title or project name	One Village One CEO: Empowering Villages through Innovations for a Global Impact
Nominee / key personnel	
URL	https://sites.google.com/apps.ipb.ac.id/onevillageoneceo/beranda?authuser=0 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381574026_Community-based_business_ecosystem_of_coffee_with_the_One_Village_One_CEO_Program_at_Cikajang_Garut https://www.ipb.ac.id/news/index/2024/06/supporting-the-achievement-of-sdgs-in-indonesia-ipb-university-introduces-ovoc-at-sdgs-centre-conference-2024/ https://www.instagram.com/ovocipb?igsh=bWxwdTBuM2RnM25w
Submission	IPB University's One Village One CEO (OVOC) programme is a pivotal initiative in crafting a vibrant rural business ecosystem through the empowerment of village-owned enterprises. The programme embraces a collaborative model, bringing together community, university, local government and private sector to provide access to capital, technical assistance, mentorship, access to technology and market. Three stages of the village business development includes: One Village One Product; One Village One Innovation; and One Village One Exporter. OVOC has significantly contributed to empower the community economically. It also involves activities that promote sustainable solutions, utilisation of climate-friendly practices, supporting renewable energy and green innovations, and improvement of local ecosystems. From 2018 to 2024, through various programmes under Community Learning Centres, IPB University has reached 6,660 villages across the nation, covering 6.1% of villages in Indonesia. The OVOC programme has contributed to 10% of this number, implemented in 10 provinces in Indonesia.

THE Awards Asia 2025

Outstanding Contribution to Regional Development

Institution Name	Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi (RMUTT)
Submission title or project name	Tackling poverty by Upcycling 100% of Plastic Bottles
Nominee / key personnel	Department of Materials and Metallurgical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering
URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEDHbtT9QZM&feature=youtu.be&themeRefresh=1
Submission	Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi (RMUTT) developed 4 low-cost machines to help a community upcycle plastic bottles and create an income to help reduce poverty problems. Training and mentorship were provided to the community, which also includes elderly and disabled people. 100% of plastic bottles, including the bottle, label, lid and ring, were upcycled to brooms, bags, tablecloths, baskets, tree pots and furniture. With continual improvement since 2018, production efficiency has been improved by 95% and a patent granted. The products achieved “community product standards” and won a “Community Enterprise Award”. Approximately 135,000 plastic bottles were upcycled producing income of 1,700,000 Baht. More than 5,000 people from other communities were trained from this community. This project was a cooperation between 5 NGOs, 4 government organisations, state enterprise and a private company. An MOU was signed with a company to produce a continuous supply to give the community a sustainable income.