



# YOUNG SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS INITIATIVE

## **What is YSEALI?**

Launched in 2013, the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) is the U.S. government's signature program to strengthen partnerships with emerging leaders in Southeast Asia; to expand their skills as effective civic, economic and non-governmental leaders in the region; and to encourage them to work together across borders to solve regional challenges.

YSEALI includes all ASEAN member countries (Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and is open to young people ages 18-35. Responding to priorities from youth in the ASEAN region, YSEALI programs focus on four themes:

- Economic development and entrepreneurship
- Environmental protection
- Education
- Civic engagement

YSEALI opportunities include professional and academic exchanges to the United States, regional workshops for networking and skills development, social media engagement, and a grant competition to support emerging leaders' efforts to address regional issues.

## **Why is YSEALI important?**

According to the ASEAN Secretariat, 65 percent of the population in the ASEAN region is under the age of thirty-five. These 400 million youth will define the Asia Pacific region for decades to come, so their full participation in solving global challenges such as climate change or economic growth is critical to the development and prosperity of the region.

## **YSEALI Facts:**

- More than 98,000 young leaders are part of the YSEALI network.
- Since 2014, 891 young leaders have participated in educational and professional exchanges in the United States.
- Nearly 1,700 youth have attended 18 skills-building regional exchange workshops in Asia.
- YSEALI has granted more than \$720,000 in seed funding to 56 teams for YSEALI-themed projects.

## About Key YSEALI programs:

The **YSEALI Academic Fellows Program** brings undergraduates or recently graduated students between the ages of 18 and 25 to the United States for a five-week institute held on the campus of a U.S. college or university. The program includes an on-campus academic residency, leadership development, interaction with American peers, an educational study tour, and community service activities. Programs conclude with a visit to Washington, D.C. to meet U.S. leaders, policymakers, and think tank experts. Each cohort of fellows studies one of three themes: *Civic Engagement*, *Environmental Issues*, or *Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development*.

The **YSEALI Professional Fellows Program** gives participants ages 25-35 the opportunity to spend five weeks in the United States, including four weeks working directly with American counterparts in individually tailored work placements with non-profit organizations, state and local government, and private-sector offices across the country. During these placements, Fellows build their practical expertise, leadership skills, and professional networks. Fellows' areas of work include environmental protection, transparency in governance, social entrepreneurship, non-profit management, disability rights, wildlife protection, and empowerment of women and girls. American hosts also travel to Southeast Asia on reciprocal exchanges under this program.

### **YSEALI Generation: Regional Exchanges**

YSEALI Generation Regional Exchanges bring together youth from all ASEAN countries to develop practical skills, learn about regional problems, and collaborate on solving common challenges. Since 2013, nearly 1,700 emerging leaders have benefited from professional workshops focused on entrepreneurship skills, workforce development, environmental studies, education, women's leadership, and other leadership skills necessary to make a positive impact in their communities.

### **Seeds for the Future: Youth in Action**

The YSEALI Seeds for the Future grants support young Southeast Asian leaders' most promising and innovative ideas for civic engagement, entrepreneurship and economic development, education, and environmental protection and natural resources management. This grant competition helps multi-national teams of entrepreneurial youth launch endeavors to solve regional challenges. Since the program began in 2014, 56 teams have been awarded over \$720,000 in seed money for YSEALI-themed projects.

### **YSEALI Network and Virtual Engagement: 98,000 Strong**

Since the launch of YSEALI in December 2013, more than 98,000 young people from ASEAN have become members of the virtual YSEALI Network. YSEALI connects leaders from across the region, and offers an array of resources, online networking opportunities, and professional trainings. The web-based platform encourages young people to collaborate on issues of shared concern, providing them with an avenue to further their own development through courses on leadership, entrepreneurship, and professional skills. The YSEALI **website** ([www.yseali.state.gov](http://www.yseali.state.gov)), **Facebook** ([www.facebook.com/youngsoutheastasianleaders](http://www.facebook.com/youngsoutheastasianleaders)), and **Twitter** ([www.twitter.com/yseali](http://www.twitter.com/yseali)) accounts regularly update network members about upcoming events, courses, resources, and opportunities.