Policy Brief
Enhancing Gender-Responsive Approaches in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
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Acknowledgements

This report is the result of the collaborative efforts and partnership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), jointly coordinating with the relevant divisions at the ASEAN Secretariat.

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Policy Brief

Enhancing Gender-Responsive Approaches in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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Catalogue-in-Publication Data
Policy Brief: Enhancing Gender-Responsive Approaches in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, October 2023

337.159
1. ASEAN – Economic Integration – Women
2. Health System – Human Security

ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All

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In our continuous efforts to further strengthen the region’s resilience and preparedness for future crises, I am delighted to introduce this policy brief titled “Enhancing Gender-Responsive Approach in ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF).” The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably had a disproportionate impact on women, leaving them vulnerable and confronting significant challenges. In the ASEAN region, the services and informal sectors, where more than 90 percent of women in the workforce are employed, have been the hardest hit. Consequently, women have witnessed a decline in economic opportunities, reduced income, limited access to healthcare services, and an increased risk of gender-based violence.

This crisis has further highlighted pre-existing gender inequalities, underscoring the urgent need for gender-responsive policies and strategies that support women’s economic security and overall well-being.

Recognising the severity of the situation, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), adopted at the 37th ASEAN Summit on 12 November 2020, places due importance on addressing the impact on these vulnerable populations and strives to mitigate their economic and social repercussions. This policy brief builds upon the valuable lessons learned from the implementation of the ACRF and provides comprehensive recommendations and pathways to integrate a gender mainstreamed approach in ASEAN’s initiatives across various dimensions, including health, human security, economic integration, digitalisation, and sustainability.

Developed collaboratively by the ASEAN Secretariat and UN Women, it highlights the achievements in promoting gender equality during the regional recovery efforts and offers crucial recommendations to economically empower women and ensure their well-being in future multidimensional crises.

The brief presents recommendations across different strategic areas outlined in the ACRF. In terms of health systems, it emphasizes the importance of ensuring women have sufficient access to healthcare services and advocates for greater participation of women as medical professionals. To strengthen human security, it suggests expanding social protection coverage to enhance women’s financial security and prioritizing measures to address gender-based violence (GBV). Similarly, it is important to consider promoting ongoing regional initiatives aimed at strengthening women’s role
within the peace and security agenda, including their active involvement in preventing violent extremism and advocating for their crucial role in post-conflict rehabilitation. In the realm of economic integration, it recommends linking the recovery of various service sectors, including micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with existing frameworks that promote decent work for all, thereby benefiting women workers.

Concerning digitalisation, policy design may consider gender disparities in access to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, as it significantly influences women’s future opportunities in the digital sector. Lastly, the policy brief underscores the importance of sex-disaggregated data to measure progress towards achieving gender equality targets outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the region’s recovery efforts. It also emphasises the need to incorporate gender mainstreaming into monitoring and evaluation frameworks for recovery initiatives.

I hope this policy brief will provide invaluable assistance to ASEAN sectoral bodies in advancing a gender mainstreaming approach beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is also my hope that this approach will be embedded in the development of the Post-2025 Vision, making it a more inclusive and comprehensive roadmap for the ASEAN region. By prioritising gender equality and empowerment, we can collectively emerge stronger from crises, ensuring the well-being and economic security of women throughout the ASEAN community.

H.E. Satvinder Singh
Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)
The COVID-19 pandemic represented not only an unprecedented global health crisis, but also a crisis for gender equality throughout the world. Although there has been encouraging progress towards achieving greater global gender equality in recent years, the negative social and economic impacts of the pandemic have disrupted this trajectory in many countries, including in the Southeast Asian region.

Since its onset, the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost every area of life. In particular, this period has seen the burden of unpaid care work fall primarily on women and girls, an increase in gender-based violence against women within households, and the loss of livelihoods disproportionally affecting women. As we move out of the crisis, urgent action is needed to both counter these regressive trends, and to close the equality gaps that were present before the pandemic began.

The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework calls upon the ASEAN community to mainstream gender as a priority throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery process. As the global champion for gender equality, UN Women stands ready to support all efforts towards this end. This policy brief aims to assist ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to formulate and implement gender-responsive strategies and approaches, including initiatives that can be effectively localised to facili-
tate lasting positive change for women and girls.

What is good for gender equality is good for all. By placing gender and human rights considerations at the heart of COVID-19 response and recovery planning, ASEAN governments can ensure that their respective nations are well-placed to recover any gains lost during the pandemic, as well as to reap the long-term rewards that come from choosing inclusive, empowering and sustainable models of development.

Ms. Sarah Knibbs
Deputy Regional Director
UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

As we move out of the crisis, urgent action is needed to both counter these regressive trends, and to close the equality gaps that were present before the pandemic began.
At its 37th Summit in November 2020, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan as a consolidated regional exit strategy from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis. The five Broad Strategies of the framework reveal the commitment of ASEAN to collaboratively mitigate and address the impacts of the pandemic on the most affected groups, including women. In particular, through Broad Strategy 2: Strengthening Human Security, ACRF aims to alleviate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on social protection, food security, human capital development, responsive labour policies, gender equality and human rights.

Guided by the objective of mainstreaming gender beyond ACRF, this policy brief promotes a number of leading practices in ASEAN on each of the five Broad Strategies and outlines practical recommendations to mainstream gender into the policy-making process, particularly in recovering from crises.

In enhancing the health system, equitable access to health services, as well as enabling opportunities for women to take part as medical professionals, will elevate the gender perspective in health sector. In terms of human security, the provision of social protection, as well as promoting women’s financial security will serve as building blocks to equip women’s resilience in crises. Ultimately, this may also mitigate the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) incidences, which are prevalent at the onset of calamities. On economic integration, gender mainstreaming has been embodied in empowering women, through tailoring recovery towards sectors that heavily employ women such as micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as informal sectors. With the uptake of digitalisation during the pandemic, such gender-mainstreamed recovery policies may as well be connected by proliferating digital means for women’s businesses. Finally, in pursuing a more resilient recovery for women, sex-disaggregated data needs to be made widely available, as well as be utilised across different cycles of policy planning and implementation. Reliable and accurate data on gender representation will facilitate enhanced gender-sensitive policies.

In addition, this policy brief offers four steps to mainstream gender into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of recovery initiatives. First, the different needs of the target groups may be under-
stood through the collection of comprehensive information at the planning stage. Second, policy goals with tailored objectives for men and women need to be clearly set during the planning stage. Third, coherent and synergised ways of working may enable women to participate. Fourth, continuous monitoring of the implementation will enable amendments and/or adjustment to be made, so that the expected outputs and/or outcomes may be achieved.

This policy brief identified four practical tools to mainstream gender throughout the policy cycle. First, gender analyses examine different roles between men and women. Second, objective verifiable gender-sensitive indicators track progress and lessons learned in the course of implementation. Third, comprehensive data collection and continuous analysis may account for different gender contexts on the ground. Fourth, gender-responsive budgeting includes tracking how much funding reaches women during implementation, and whether this funding is sufficient to bring benefits to women.

This policy brief may be used as a reference point for policymakers who intend to bring inclusivity and a participatory approach to their policy planning and implementation.

“Strengthening Human Security is on the provision of social protection and promoting women’s financial security as building blocks to equip women’s resilience in crises.”
The commitment to mainstream gender equality throughout the recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN includes broad strategies in the area of enhancing health system, maximizing intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration, inclusive digital transformation as well as advancing sustainable and resilient future.
Context

At its 37th Summit in November 2020, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan as as the region’s consolidated exit strategy from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, ASEAN Member States reaffirmed their strong commitment to promoting the rights of all women and girls, recognising the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and the indispensable role women and girls have played in the fight against the pandemic.

Of five broad strategies under the ACRF, the Broad Strategy 2: Strengthening Human Security, one of the key priorities is to mainstream gender equality throughout the recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN. The COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis like no other, and its recovery presents an opportunity to centre women and girls, and enable a more effective response for all. Therefore, the commitment shall also be mainstreamed across remaining broad strategies in the area of enhancing health system, maximizing intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration, inclusive digital transformation, as well as advancing sustainable and resilient future.

While COVID-19 cases in ASEAN countries constituted only 2 per cent of cases globally, the impacts of the unprecedented crisis are widely felt, with women disproportionately bearing the burden, including in impacts on livelihoods, increased burdens of unpaid care work and increased risks of gender-based violence (GBV). For instance, significant measures have been taken in ASEAN countries to address GBV, accounting for 43 out of the 162 national level policy measures implemented to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Conversely, only few measures address either women’s economic security or unpaid care work, although these two areas are key to achieving not only Broad Strategy 2 on strengthening human security, but also enhancing health systems, strengthening intra-ASEAN markets, accelerating digital transformation and achieving a more sustainable and resilient future.

This policy brief on gender mainstreaming in ACRF contains an outline of practical measures based on gender data that is foundational to incorporating gender mainstreaming in each broad strategy. It contains an overview of key gender-responsive policy measures and practices to enable cross-sector and cross-pillar collaboration, while showcasing the leadership of ASEAN and its commitment towards a global gender-responsive recovery.

1 The Economic and Social Council defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. All United Nations Member States have agreed to implement gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality. See A/52/3, chapter IV, Coordination of the Policies and Activities of the Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System, Mainstreaming the gender perspective not all policies and programmes of the United Nations System, Report of the Secretary General. Available at www.un.org/esa/documents/ecosoc/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm . See also www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming.


3 UN Women and UNDP COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker.
The three pillars of the ASEAN Community as agreed in the Bali Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (7 October 2003), namely the ASEAN Political and Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, show a specific commitment to increasing the standard of living and welfare of the population of ASEAN with the vision that these three be mutually reinforcing and linked.

In this manner, all three aspects of ASEAN integration have the same importance. According to the ASEAN Charter (article 1, paragraph 11), in order to enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN, equality of opportunities for human development, as well as social welfare and justice need to be ensured.

In addition to legislation and institutions, concrete measures need to be secured. The ASEAN Economic Community may contribute to these goals, for instance, to pursue inclusive policies through a socially sustainable fiscal and macroeconomic policy.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community envisions a community that promotes and improves the quality of life and realises the full potential of its people by cooperating on a wide range of areas. It aims to ensure outcomes are inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic, and engage with and benefit the people.

The international commitments of ASEAN Member States to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
and the conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization provide a firm basis for the legal framework underpinning the expansion of social protection in the region with a human rights-based approach.

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) supports gender mainstreaming in its activities as reflected in its five-year workplan 2021–2025, which contributes to ACRF, in particular to Broad Strategies 2 and 5.

The ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) supports this work through specific mandates that are reflected in workplans, as well as in the regional frameworks and action plans developed to ensure the realisation of people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN where all people, including women and girls, are able to reach their full potential. The commitment of ASEAN to achieve gender equality is evident in the ACW workplan 2021–2025 under Vision 2: Gender Mainstreaming, which focuses on ensuring the gender-responsive implementation of ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and gender mainstreaming in ACRF.

Source: Based on analysis of ASEAN documentation.

This policy brief contains an analysis of the situation of women and gender equality across the five Broad Strategies of ACRF. It includes policy options and possible guidance on how to mainstream gender given that most countries have incorporated gender mainstreaming policies into their national recovery plans.
Policymakers in ASEAN Member States may consider the needs of women and men to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 for everyone and to build back better.
Gender and recovery efforts

Why does gender matter in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts?

Women and men have different roles and responsibilities in society because of existing gender norms. Gender may determine employment in different sectors and and may determine different tasks assigned at home. As a result, women and men are affected differently by COVID-19 mitigation and recovery measures, and those measures affect different economic sectors and groups of society differently. Policymakers in ASEAN Member States may consider the needs of women and men to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 for everyone and to build back better.

Four main areas of concern

ONE

The COVID-19 pandemic has global implications, including for women and girls.

TWO

Evidence from the Ebola and Zika outbreaks reveals that infectious diseases could magnify existing inequalities, including economic status, ability, age and gender.

THREE

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have had far-reaching gendered implications, from exacerbating violence against women to inhibiting women’s engagement in the labour market.

FOUR

The pandemic threatens to reverse hard won gains on gender equality, and women and girls have vulnerability to COVID-19 transmission and impact.

How important is gender mainstreaming to the recovery efforts?

Promoting gender mainstreaming is critical within sustainable recovery efforts. It will help to address gender inequalities that the COVID-19 crisis revealed and worsened (box 2). This means that recovery efforts should address impacts on marginalised groups, including women. Gender mainstreaming in programme design may be pursued through gender analysis and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to identify and close funding gaps for implementing gender-responsive policies and programmes, to identify actions to ensure that national and local commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment are adequately funded, and put in place robust monitoring and evaluation methods. These efforts may provide gender data and gender perspectives that may be used in analysing existing initiatives embedded within each Broad Strategy of ACRF.
Experiences with local, national and global infectious disease response showed that a systematic and intentional use of a gender lens will lead to a better outcome. Women’s leadership and contributions are critical to curbing infection rates and enabling resilience and recovery. An analysis of women’s vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic by UN Women has identified five critical areas that increase the vulnerability of women and girls, and that all comprehensive response plans may address.

Box 2 | **Five critical areas that increase the vulnerability of women**

Women’s leadership and contributions are critical to curbing infection rates and enabling resilience and recovery.
During pandemics, there is increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV).
The poorest women and girls are vulnerable to unemployment and economic and livelihood impacts.
Care and domestic work is distributed unequally.
Women and girls’ voices often times are not being included for an informed and effective response during crises.
Policy response mechanisms may not incorporate sex-disaggregated data or gender-responsive plans.

Gender mainstreaming does not entail a separate strategy or set of measures, but it entails integrating gender-sensitive measures to frameworks, such as ACRF. Such measures include different practical and strategic needs of women and men, the likely impact of the measures and the identification of indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In terms of gender-based violence to address the COVID-19 crisis, all ASEAN Member States responded promptly as indicated in table 1. Of 162 measures taken across ASEAN to deal with the COVID-19 crisis, around one third were gender-sensitive and addressed violence against women. While efforts have been made in advancing measures on employment and social protection, more may need to be done to promote women’s economic security and recognise the importance of unpaid care work in the region.

In addition, although progress towards gender mainstreaming has been made in several national-level planning instruments, including commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), ASEAN Member States may consider introducing gender-sensitive responses to their fiscal, monetary and economic measures during crises. This highlights the need to strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, including during crises, and to increase awareness of its importance in any public action.

Table 1 Number of policy measures to address the COVID-19 crisis in ASEAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/territory</th>
<th>All measures</th>
<th>Gender-sensitive measures</th>
<th>Violence against women</th>
<th>Women’s economic security</th>
<th>Unpaid care work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162**</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Women and UNDP, COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. ** Not all gender-sensitive measures are classified within the categories, thus there may be discrepancies between the total number of measures and number of policies by category.
Worldwide, women make up more than 50 per cent of the health sector workforce. Estimates by WHO set the figure as high as 70 per cent.
Despite the high participation of women in the health and social sectors, gender transformative policies are needed to address inequities and close the gender gap in earnings, remove barriers for women to access full-time employment and promote access to professional development and leadership roles. Worldwide, women make up more than 50 per cent of the health sector workforce. Estimates by WHO set the figure as high as 70 per cent.

Women had a significant role in the health workforce during the COVID-19 crisis, yet WHO figures indicate that the gender pay gap stands at 28 per cent in the sector overall. The gap is reduced to 11 per cent when occupations and working hours are accounted for. According to recent data, most ASEAN Member States have more than 80 per cent of female nurses. Available latest data for remaining ASEAN Member States indicate 40–48 per cent medical doctors are women.

Noting this, ASEAN Member States made a number of commitments to promote a more inclusive approach through the various health priorities in the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda 2021–2025, particularly in the implementation of the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on One Health Initiative, the ASEAN Strategic Framework on Public Health Emergencies, as well as the Regional Strategic and Action Plan on ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance, among others. These measures can serve as a building block for the development of specific regional activities focusing on gender and social inclusion in the health sector tailored to specific national contexts. Women’s access to better reproductive health, which was limited before the pandemic, may have been worsened by it.

Improvement may be pursued to reduce the maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, as well as promoting the use of healthy contraceptives in several ASEAN Member States (see table 2 in the next page).

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Table 2  Gender sensitive measures under Strengthening Health System and Access to Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>SDG3.4</th>
<th>SDG3.1</th>
<th>SDG3.7</th>
<th>SDG3.7, 5.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>78.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>61.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Other diseases as cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease, female. (%) | ** (Deaths per 100,000 live births). | *** (Births per 1,000 women ages 15–19). | **** (% of married or in-union women of reproductive age, 15–49 years). | nd = No Data. | a. Data are average annual estimates for 2015–2020. | Source: Human Development Index. Gender Inequality and the COVID-19 Crisis: A Human Development Perspective, UNDP.

Figure 1  Women age 15–49 who reported problems in accessing care due to financial reasons, by income quintile (%)

Source: DHS and MICS surveys, selected years.
Box 3 | Gender-sensitive measures under the AHC 3 on “Strengthening Health System and Access to Care”

Linking to the ACRF, ASEAN Health Cluster 3 (AHC 3) on Strengthening Health System and Access to Care has incorporated the gender sensitive measures and considerations with specific focus on enhancing health services for special populations, as defined by the AHC 3 to comprise women, mothers, and children. This is realised through three key priorities on:

1. Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health;
2. Universal Health Coverage including health financing and health service delivery; and
3. Migrants’ health with specific indicators on the complementary efforts between national policy measures and regional policy and capacity building initiatives in ASEAN.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportionate impact on women and children, and marginalised groups, such as women migrant workers. Migrants without legal documents face barriers to enrolling in social health insurance and therefore resort to paying for health services out of pocket. Undocumented migrants may have been exempted from health care charges, subsidised by hospital revenue, but only at the discretion of hospital staff. Therefore, crisis recovery and future efforts beyond the pandemic may prioritise the needs of these population groups.

Furthermore, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHSs) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICSs) in various ASEAN Member States show poverty significantly reduces access to health services that can further exacerbate the weaker health status of a significant proportion of women. Figure 1 (to the left) shows the situation before the pandemic in several ASEAN Member States with DHS data. Although the scale of the problem is quite large in all countries, it is important to highlight that discrepancies between countries may indicate good practices that could be shared. For instance, several ASEAN Member States made efforts to expand health coverage to all citizens. The high level of migration in many countries has not been factored into these efforts.

Being inclusive to women in the health sector is key to enhancing health systems under Broad Strategy 1. In terms of equipping women health professionals, one of the good initiatives that has already started in ASEAN is called Higher Education for ASEAN Talents (HEAT) Programme, which offer scholarship opportunities for ASEAN nationals to study in universities in the Republic of Korea, including for medical professionals and those who are interested in STEM. Moving forward, such programme may consider to target women to receive the scholarships.

Strengthening access to health care during non-crisis times will reduce vulnerability through prevention and the reduction of the incidence of disease. It will be important to take into account rural-urban differences and promote investments in ensuring access to medical services are available for populations in rural and remote areas, one of which can be optimised through digital and mobile unit solutions.


Women were more likely to note the increase in unpaid care and domestic work during the pandemic. The burden of unpaid carer work plays an exceptionally large part in limiting women’s social and economic opportunities.
Broad Strategy 2: Strengthening human security

One of the most significant impacts of the COVID-19 crisis has been the increased reports of GBV.10 This includes domestic violence, violence by employers of domestic workers as well as trafficking and online harassment.11

Another key area that has gained increasing attention from policymakers and decision makers in recent years is the issue of unpaid care and domestic work. Women were more likely to note the increase in unpaid care and domestic work during the pandemic. The burden of unpaid care work plays an exceptionally large part in limiting women’s social and economic opportunities.

Since the pandemic has affected the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, an integrated and multidimensional response is necessary to manage the recovery. Investing in gender-responsive social protection in the post-pandemic recovery is more urgent than ever to ensure that both men and women regain their source of livelihoods while recognising the importance of care work in the economy and creating a pathway for sustainable development. ASEAN serves as a critical platform for regional and multilateral cooperation to address cross-border issues, including issues related to the recovery (see box 4 on the next page).

The key priorities for Broad Strategy 2 include mitigating and responding to the impacts of the pandemic on a wide range of social dimensions, including social protection and social welfare, food security, food safety and nutrition, human capital development, responsive labour policies, mainstreaming gender equality throughout recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN, as well as mainstreaming human rights in the post-pandemic recovery towards resilient region. GBV may be integrated into gender mainstreaming throughout the recovery scheme12 and actions in ASEAN, and gender mainstreaming can extend beyond health rights in public health emergencies.

The gender-sensitive policies dashboard (see table 1 on page 17) shows that ASEAN Member States have a variety of policies in place to address GBV. Therefore, in addition to focusing on the importance of economic security and empowerment, regional efforts under ASEAN may consider the inclusion of efforts to eliminate GBV.

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10 See, the ASEAN Gender Outlook, March 2021, available at https://data.unwomen.org/publications/asean-gender-outlook
12 ASEAN already has developed a gender mainstreaming guide for labour and employment policies that may be applied in the implementation of recovery measures within the ACRF framework. See https://asean.org/asean-guide-line-on-gender-mainstreaming-into-labour-and-employment-policies-towards-decent-work-for-all-2/
Declaration on Portability of Social Security Benefit for Migrant Workers in ASEAN was adopted in November 2022 demonstrates the commitment of ASEAN Leaders to promote social protection and social security system for the migrant workers in the region. An ASEAN Guidelines on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers is being prepared to follow-through on this commitment. At the 42nd ASEAN Summit held on 10 May 2023, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations demonstrating ASEAN’s joint commitment for better preparedness of policies including assistance to migrant workers across occupational areas at all stages of crisis preparedness, response and recovery for the specific needs of migrant workers, especially women, and their families already residing with them in crisis situations and to take practical actions in anticipating future possible crises in accordance with the respective ASEAN Member States’ national laws, regulations, and policies. In addition, ASEAN Leaders also adopted the Declaration on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers. Through this Declaration, AMS endeavour to take appropriate and gender responsive measures to identify, address and punish all forms of violence, abuses and exploitation against migrant fishers.

Women are significant contributors to social security in the ASEAN region, as they constitute approximately half of international migrants in ASEAN Member States.
In the recent years, there has been increasing progress to extend social protection for migrant workers in several countries in the region which extended its social security for migrant workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has further heightened the need of social protection for migrant workers especially women facing gender-based vulnerabilities. Against this context, more efforts can be done to ensure that migrant workers in all sectors and across different workplaces in ASEAN have access to expanded social protection and social security scheme, including women as significant contributors to social security in the ASEAN region, considering they constitute nearly half of international migrants in ASEAN Member States. Their contributions may build stronger and financially healthier social security systems by growing the tax base, spreading risk across a larger pool of members, and enhancing financial sustainability.

According to the ILO rapid assessment of ASEAN migrant workers conducted on March–April 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, only 3 per cent unemployed migrant workers had access to any social security support during COVID-19. Improvement was observable as the follow-up ILO rapid assessment of ASEAN Migrant Workers undertaken in October–December 2020 revealed that 43 per cent migrants who were no longer working had accessed to social security, compensation for unemployment/retrenchment or any other state-funded emergency livelihood support.

Limited access to health care, no sickness benefits, and no unemployment benefits exacerbated the COVID-19 impacts on migrant workers and threw many migrant worker families into debt and poverty. In addition, employers also lost qualified staff which penalised them during the recovery phase.

Furthermore, the use of sex-disaggregated data can strengthen efforts to ensure the safety and productivity of migrant workers. There is an urgent need to look at the intersectionality of advancing gender equality, including for older people and people with disabilities. In this regard, the inclusion for these communities may facilitate inclusive and responsive resilience-building efforts for ASEAN to address the widening gap on labour participation beyond the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

13 As elaborated through report on Social Protection for Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Developments, challenges, and prospects, accessible at: https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/WCMS_655176/lang--en/index.htm
14 See the ASEAN Migration Outlook accessible at: https://asean.org/book/asean-migration-outlook/
15 As outlined on the Study Report on the Portability of Social Security Rights between ASEAN Member States accessible at: https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EPUB-Study-Report-on-the-Portability-of-Social-Security-Rights-between-ASEAN-Member-States-Final-Sep2021.pdf in accordance with several ASEAN Member States’ respective national legislation, migrant workers may have access to various schemes of social protection and social security, albeit not equivalent to the measures available for local workers.
16 Calculated from international migrant stock in ASEAN Member States by country of destination. See: https://asean.org/book/asean-migration-outlook/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key priority 2e</th>
<th>Initiatives and programmes</th>
<th>Outputs and deliverables</th>
<th>Phase and timeline of implementation</th>
<th>Lead / relevant sectoral bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming gender equality throughout recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN</td>
<td>1. Integrating gender equality into policy strategy, planning and monitoring processes by all government institutions and strengthening human resources, knowledge and capacity [the Regional Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming].</td>
<td>Practical guidelines for each pillar and sectoral bodies developed.</td>
<td>All phases</td>
<td>ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Advancing Women, Peace and Security in the ASEAN Region.</td>
<td>Regional study and identification of priority areas, including in conflict, humanitarian emergency settings as well as in economic recovery.</td>
<td>Recovery and resilience</td>
<td>ACW, ACWC, ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More efforts may be directed to ensure the availability of gender data and analysis at the country level to track leading practices of the recovery efforts, including identifying opportunities to expand policy and programme interventions to address structural inequalities, including to enhance gender equity.

Furthermore, the regional study and identification of priority areas, including in conflict, humanitarian emergency settings as well as in economic recovery may have a strong gender focus in order to promote comprehensive human rights.

Several key priorities under Broad Strategy 2 have a direct impact on the welfare of women and children. As shown in Table 3 (to the left), key priority 2e supports the mainstreaming of gender perspectives throughout the rest of the Broad Strategies implemented by ACW and ACWC to enhance the recovery and resilience phases of ACRF, particularly in ensuring that the recovery measures are gender-responsive, inclusive, equitable and sustainable.
Targeting women-owned and women-led MSMEs can help to accelerate the effort to ensure that women and men equally benefit from the intra-ASEAN market.
With the collapse of both the demand and supply sides of the market during the COVID-19 crisis, many women, including women migrant workers and those working in MSMEs, lost their livelihoods from one day to the next, without sufficient safety nets, financial security or social protection to rely on. The aim of economic integration for both businesses and citizens is to be resilient during crises. Paths to formal employment need to respond to the impacts of crises, including by re-skilling the workforce, supporting financial inclusion and providing universal social protection.

In the context of the intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration, a number of key priorities in Broad Strategy 3 are relevant to ensure that women’s practical and strategic needs are considered in trade policies, including greater participation of women in decision-making for economic policies, and greater women ownership of MSMEs, especially in heavily-affected sectors such as food, health care, tourism and hospitality. In addition, emerging opportunities for MSME in the digital economy and creative industries may also be tailored to empower women.

Key relevant regional policy frameworks include the Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism which identifies “raising awareness of gender-based discrimination/harassment through public education programmes and training” as one of the key actions to protect women and children in tourism destinations. In line with this, the ASEAN Gender and Development Tourism Framework was adopted by ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (ASEAN NTOs) in 2019 with the institutional goal of having a gender-responsive ASEAN Tourism Industry by 2030.

In addition, initiatives such as ASEAN Access, a flagship platform for ASEAN businesses, are helping MSMEs to be more competitive at the international level and enabling them to participate in cross-border trade by providing relevant information and services such as market talks and business matching. More specific strategies targeting women-owned and women-led MSMEs can help to accelerate the effort to ensure that women and men equally benefit from the intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration in the region.

Broad Strategy 3 has a direct impact on the livelihoods of a large proportion of citizens across ASEAN, the already existing Declaration on Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women’s Entrepreneurship in ASEAN, ASEAN Guideline on Gender Mainstreaming into Labour and Employment Policies Towards Decent Work for All can support this broad strategy.

A manual was developed to operationalise the Guideline to enhance capacities, knowledge, and awareness of AMS on gender equality in the world of work. In the civil service sector, the enhanced Gender Mainstreaming in Human Resource Toolkit has been endorsed by ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM) on 15 July 2023 to ensure that gender mainstreaming is in line with the region’s continuous efforts to realise good governance, which would also support this broad strategy. Successful implementation of outputs and deliverables under this Key Priority may contribute to the sectors that heavily employ women.
Several root causes of the digital gender divide are barriers to access, affordability of digital tools, lack of technological literacy, as well as inherent biases and socio-cultural norms that lead to gender-based digital discrimination.
The use of technologies expanded during the pandemic, and digital gender gaps were amplified. The digital gender gap may affect the achievements of key priorities outlined for Broad Strategy 4. Several root causes of the digital gender divide are barriers to access, affordability of digital tools, lack of technological literacy, as well as inherent biases and socio-cultural norms that lead to gender-based digital discrimination.\(^\text{23}\)

Noting the importance of equal access to digitalization in the education sector, ASEAN Leaders adopted the Declaration on Digital Transformation of Education Systems in ASEAN at the 40th and 41st Summits to reaffirm ASEAN Member States’ commitment to addressing the digital divide, improving access to safe digital learning opportunities, fostering digital literacy, and developing transferable skills among students.

As for empowering MSMEs, women and persons with disabilities in digital transformation, ASEAN has several tools that can be leveraged, such as ASEAN SME Academy and Toolkit for Policymakers on Strengthening Women’s Entrepreneurship.\(^\text{24}\)

### Table 4: Female Internet users and mobile telephone owners, selected ASEAN Member States (% of female population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Internet users, female (%)</th>
<th>Proportion of female population who own a mobile telephone (SDG 5.b.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% of female population)</td>
<td>(% of female population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018–2022*</td>
<td>2017–2021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Viet Nam         | 75.6                        | 76.5                                                             


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A regional public-private initiative called “Go Digital ASEAN” was also designed to broaden digital participation in the region, especially in rural areas and underserved communities. Through this initiative, trainings on digital skills have positively impacted more than 225,000 MSMEs owners and job-seekers across the region. Follow-up programmes are being implemented under Go Digital ASEAN 2 with a focus on women entrepreneurs.

This type of initiative can be enhanced with a stronger gender analysis, including analysis of the impact of the training to ensure equal opportunities for all. In addition, close linkages need to be drawn between a wide range of initiatives under Broad Strategy 3 in accelerating sectoral recovery, particularly for MSMEs, with a wide range of initiatives under Broad Strategy 4 tailored to build the digital skills of MSME owners. Such linkages may inform leading policies may need to be implemented to ensure more female adolescents finalize their secondary education and continue in vocational and tertiary education linked to STEM, to ensure they have equal access to employment in the STEM sector.
practices and lessons learned in mainstreaming gender to empower women-led MSMEs during crises.

To build women’s resilience moving forward, women will be encouraged to participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). According to a recent study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), women hold only 18.5 per cent of the research positions in South and West Asia and 23.4 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific. Gender differences in STEM fields do not start in the labour market, nor even in higher education – they begin in student performance as young as 15 years old.

In countries where there is a gender gap in the performance of students at the secondary education level, women tend to be underrepresented in STEM-related higher education, as well as in the STEM labour market. Therefore, policies may need to be implemented to ensure more female adolescents finalise their secondary education and continue in vocational and tertiary education linked to STEM, to ensure they have equal access to employment in the STEM sector. To support this, gender mainstreaming may be considered in the implementation of regional initiatives on digitalisation, including the ASEAN Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan 2019–2025, as well as developing gender-sensitive indicators in the ASEAN Digital Integration Index (ADII) may be further considered shall there be plan to revise the ADII.

Broad Strategy 4 is an important part of modernising the ASEAN region as prominent digital hub. Upholding the principle of leaving no one behind and ensuring that women have equal and meaningful access to digitalization, may be prioritised. To realize this, evidence-based policymaking and decision-making processes supported by gender data, including sex-disaggregated data, and analysis will help to inform the concrete strategies and plans, and measure progress to increase opportunities to achieve the projected US$ 1 trillion in gross domestic product (GDP) needed in the region by 2025.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality. ASEAN has made some progress in the collection and analysis of gender data to monitor progress on gender equality that can be leveraged to support Broad Strategy 5". 
Sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality. Gender equality was one of six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2017 session of the United Nations High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development. The report outlined several challenges, including the financing to support the implementation of Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Nevertheless, in the recent years, ASEAN has made some progress in the collection and analysis of gender data to monitor progress on gender equality that can be leveraged to support Broad Strategy 5. In 2020, the ASEAN Community Statistical System, through the Working Group of SDG Indicators (WGSDGI), made progress in advancing data collection efforts. In this connection, ACSS provided technical support on the development of the ASEAN Gender Outlook: Achieving the SDGs for all and leaving no woman and girl behind, jointly produced by ACW and UN Women to track progress on the SDGs at the regional level from the gender lens.

In addition, ASEAN has also made an effort to advance gender-responsive climate action and resilience building at the regional level through its regional flagship publication, the State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in ASEAN launched in August 2022. Furthermore, ASEAN has also made an effort to develop and implement the ASEAN Regional Policy Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion (ARF-PGI) to translate the gender and social inclusion principle of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025 into action. ARF-PGI provides a regional policy guidance to increase awareness among policymakers and decisionmakers in the region to mainstream gender into disaster management, which is key to promote sustainable and resilience future of the region. Incorporating relevant SDGs indicators, such as those presented in Table 2 (on page 20) in this policy brief, may guide policymaking that is built upon the promotion of women’s rights.

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Box 5 | Questions posed by the World Wide Web Foundation and the Internet Foundation on the gender digital divide and results for attainment of SDG targets

The World Wide Web Foundation singled out two kinds of content and services that are particularly critical to women’s rights and opportunities, and are directly relevant to SDG targets: (1) online availability of sexual and reproductive health information; and (2) digital financial services.

Do these align with the priority areas in your country, and if so, what are the strategies for accelerating the availability of user-friendly, locally relevant online content and services in these two areas?

What are the good practices in ensuring that public-private partnerships are gender sensitive and inclusive?

What are the strategies that different development sectors, including agriculture, education, health and finance can adopt to ensure that their digital interventions are bridging the gender digital divide and not widening it?

Source: World Wide Web Foundation and Internet Foundation.

Broad Strategy 5 reaffirms the commitment to develop a recovery framework that is long-lasting, inclusive and capable of safeguarding the region’s natural resources, social fabric and the prosperity of its people.
Three of the nine targets of Goal 5 are covered in the ASEAN SDG Baseline Indicators Report 2020. The Working Group of SDG Indicators (WGSDGI) is committed to gradually improve data availability at the ASEAN level. In this regard, the inclusion of other relevant SDGs at the ASEAN level may need to be considered.

Data for target 5.1 on legislative frameworks alone indicates that there is much work has yet to be done in the region and that the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly could work on legislative frameworks to support missing or legislation in need of reform to conform to international standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). According to the World Bank’s database on Women, Business and the Law, the East Asia and Pacific region has strengthened its gender equality legislation since 1971, however, by 2020, the index for the region as a whole stood at 69.9 out of a possible 100.

The targets and indicators of SDG 5 can be used to reflect on the achievement of this broad strategy. This includes linking specific gender specific and relevant indicators to the SDG targets (see the example in the ASEAN Gender Outlook). These indicators are readily available, which may be integrated into the monitoring of ACRF as well as into national monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the recovery plans.

Gender equality has been acknowledged both as an enabler of and accelerator for the SDGs. Very few or negligible trade-offs can be identified while examples of multiplier effects and positive interlinkages abound. In addition to having a dedicated goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment, sex-disaggregated and gender relevant indicators have been incorporated into many other SDGs and have been agreed to by ASEAN Member States.

Broad Strategy 5 reaffirms the commitment to develop a recovery framework that is durable, long-lasting, inclusive and capable of safeguarding the region’s natural resources, social fabric and the prosperity of its people. A return to ‘business as usual’ is no longer an option for ASEAN in the post-pandemic world, and this paradigm shift will require governments, businesses and civil society in the region to work collectively to enable systemic change for a sustainable and resilient future. Relevant SDG targets may be adequately monitored and policies may be put in place to track progress in promoting gender equity.

25 For interlinkages in the Asia Pacific region, including some ASEAN Member States, see https://sdginterlinkages.iges.jp/visualisationtool.html
As the recovery efforts move into the implementation phase, the existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks may be assessed to determine whether gender mainstreaming has been sufficient.
Tools and steps for gender mainstreaming in ACRF

This section gives a general outline of tools and steps to mainstream gender in regional recovery efforts. As the recovery efforts move into the implementation phase, the existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks may be assessed to determine whether gender mainstreaming has been sufficient.

Broad policy recommendations

It is vital that responses to the crises take stock of the different needs of women and men, to prevent the exacerbation of inequalities that can ultimately put recovery efforts at risk. The following broad policy recommendations may be incorporated into ACRF and the national recovery efforts to ensure adequate gender mainstreaming.

Macroeconomic policy

Macroeconomic and inclusive growth policies and strategies may allocate resources to the sectors in which women are heavily employed (such as agriculture and the informal sector) and acknowledge and value unpaid care work.

Economic activity and employment

The main objective shall be focused on keeping businesses afloat, therefore women’s business and economic activities are sheltered from the negative impacts of the pandemic. Focus on design of the schemes.

Food security

Acknowledge structural gaps (malnutrition/stunting), ensure school meals provide the same nutrition for all children (boys and girls) and support women farmers through credits and technical assistance.

Social infrastructure and public services

Social infrastructure and public services are key for addressing structural inequalities in health and time use and for preventing and responding to violence against women.

Social protection

- Acknowledge structural gaps (protection may not reach all informal and poor workers) and increase coverage, raise benefit adequacy and simplify eligibility rules and administrative procedures.
- Highlight the importance of linking gender equality, social inclusion, social protection and overall social welfare and development.
- Allocate public and private funds to invest in care support services and care infrastructure that recognises and redistributes unpaid care work.
- Ensure the substantive and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes, particularly to contribute insights on women’s economic empowerment through adequately facilitating women-led MSMEs and women workers in informal sectors.
- Tailor protection schemes to address the GBV and build resilience to future shocks.
The need for gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks

There are a number of benefits of introducing gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks. First, it will determine the gendered dimensions of resource access and use. A number of tools and frameworks of ACRF can strengthen collective recovery response for mutually beneficial results. The impacts on women and men of these policy decisions are not the same. Identifying and reflecting these differences in the national recovery responses will help to track the impact and make relevant changes if needed. Second, mainstreaming gender into the policy approach will help to strengthen accountability for commitments to gender equality at the regional, national, state and local levels. Third, it will lead to more sustainable and effective policies as the monitoring process and indicators inform evaluation efforts and lessons learned, which are then incorporated into successive policy cycles.

Three important concepts are pivotal to distinguish between different approaches to policymaking for gender equality (figure 2). First, gender neutral policies are apparently aimed specifically at men or women and are assumed to affect both sexes equally. A disaggregated gender-based analysis may reveal if its impact is in fact equal. Second, gender-blind policy would not consider the different roles and responsibilities ascribed to men and women that are influenced by specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. Third, gender-responsive policies and outcomes reflect a deep understanding of gender roles. It is recommended that policymakers consider these three policy approaches while designing and implementing policies to ensure that policy measures are gender-responsive.

**Figure 2.** Policy approaches to gender

- **Gender-Responsive Policy**
  Understands gender roles, needs and inequalities and encourages equal participation and distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits. At its highest level, it attempts to transform root causes of inequality.

- **Gender-Neutral Policy**
  Not specifically aimed at either women or men and assumed to affect both sexes equally. In most cases, it proves to be gender-blind, leading to worsen inequalities.

- **Gender-Blind Policy**
  Fails to recognize that the roles of women/girls and men/boys are imposed upon them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts.
Mainstreaming gender in monitoring and evaluation frameworks of public policies

This section contains a practical overview of four steps to mainstreaming gender in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of public policies. In general, monitoring is used to assess ways of working and to make sure that goals are reached. It is ideal to carry out monitoring in an iterative process that enables relevant changes and adjustments to be made if problems or barriers to implementation are found, or if unforeseen effects appear. A gender perspective can be incorporated at the beginning of the programme design to reduce problems, barriers or unforeseen effects. Ideally, policymakers may follow these steps from the very beginning of the policymaking process, but it is always possible to find entry points at any stage of the policy cycle. A summary of the four steps is contained in figure 3.

**Identifying needs**

In the first place, policymakers may take stock and incorporate the needs of the different target groups through careful data collection exercises.

**Figure 3.** Four steps in engendering monitoring and evaluation frameworks
Here, gender analysis is key to understanding the specific situation and needs of women and men (and people of different age groups or other characteristics). Therefore, the collection of gender and age disaggregated data is critical in order to reveal existing gaps. This may include qualitative data in order to triangulate results from statistical methods and assess the practical and strategic needs of women and men, and non-traditional groups.

**Setting goals in public policy**

Goals may reflect the desired outcomes for both men and women, using gender-responsive or gender-transformative goals when needed. This approach is encouraged in ACRF under key priority 2e on gender mainstreaming within Broad Strategy 2. However, gender mainstreaming does not happen in vacuum. The goals already set by ASEAN on gender equality and women’s empowerment may incorporate the relevant initiatives and programmes of each of the five Broad Strategies.

“Goals may reflect the desired outcomes for both men and women, using gender-responsive or gender-transformative goals when needed. This approach is encouraged in ACRF under key priority 2e on gender mainstreaming within Broad Strategy 2.”
The recommendations offered throughout this policy brief can be used to set the goals in a wide range of public policies tailored for women. In the case of national plans, revisiting the relevance of national indicators to inform SDG achievement can guide the adaptation of policies and measures.

**Determining the ways of working**

Use an appropriate and comprehensive theory of change and ensure progress by creating a gender-sensitive results and monitoring framework. A solid results framework may reflect the needs and realities of both men and women.

First, a monitoring framework may reflect gender-sensitive goals. Second, gender responsive/transformative and sex-disaggregated indicators may be incorporated. Third, the programme design may include gender goals and gender-sensitive budgets. Fourth, ensure that women are able to participate in relevant activities. These four elements will make up the results of the previous efforts.

**Monitor for results**

Ensure that an evaluation is designed and incorporated during the policy planning stage in order to determine the real impact of the recovery efforts. It is important that women and men are involved in monitoring processes. As data sources, ASEAN-wide women’s organizations may contribute to ensure women’s participation is enabled and promoted in the region. It is also recommended to take this opportunity to strengthen ASEAN staff capacity on gender, particularly for the ACW and ACWC.
The focus of this section is on four tools to mainstream gender in COVID-19 response and recovery plans — what they are and how they work (see figure 4 below). These tools would significantly support ASEAN Member States as well as the ASEAN sectoral bodies to enhance gender-responsive planning at the national and regional levels to ensure greater impact of ACRF in addressing the specific situation of women and men during and after the crisis and setting priorities during the recovery phase. In addition, mainstreaming gender into recovery policy and practice may add significant value and lessons learned as ASEAN and ASEAN Member States move towards planning and developing future planning and programming of the workplans of ASEAN sectoral bodies, which cover potential opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration to promote gender-responsive resilience in the post-COVID-19 recovery.

**Figure 4. Four tools for gender mainstreaming**

- **GENDER ANALYSIS**
  Examining the differences between gender roles, their power, needs, constraints and opportunities. And these differences effect on people’s lives, specifically those derived from COVID 19.

- **GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING**
  Expenditure tracking system with reports on how it is reaching women and supporting gender equality and budgetary documents related to the response and recovery packages.

- **GENDER-RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM**
  Routine collection of information to measure and follow the progress of the response, adjusting plans as necessary, and impact evaluating at the end.

- **GENDER-SENSITIVE INDICATORS**
  Based on gender analysis, develop gender-sensitive indicators that are objectively verifiable and meet SMART* criteria.

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*SMART indicators: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely

Source: UN Women, FAO-UNDP-UNEP, European Institute for Gender Equality
In the first place, gender analysis helps policymakers to examine the differences between women and men and the roles they are assigned in society. This includes different levels of power play, identification of different needs, different constraints and opportunities, as well as the differentiated impacts of crises. This policy brief contains analyses of several salient issues for each Broad Strategy. However, policymakers may consider investing in qualitative methods to better understand the issues ASEAN-wide.

Next, gender-sensitive indicators will allow monitoring of specific policy responses. Indicators should be objectively and subjectively verifiable. They should be both quantitative and qualitative. They should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-ly (SMART criteria). This is relevant to the intended deliverables of ACRF key priority 2e on gender mainstreaming, enhancing gender data and evidence on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls (see table 3 on page 26).

It is important to remember that gender mainstreaming entails a process of routine data collection to measure and follow the progress of the response, including its gender responsiveness, including making changes and adjustments as necessary, and conducting evaluations throughout the policy cycle in order to determine its real impact in terms of the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and other evaluation objectives.

Finally, the role of gender-responsive budgeting is significant as a tool that can support governments and civil society to assess how and the extent to which policy measures promote gender equality. It is also important in monitoring how measures are operationalized and implemented as there can be many obstacles to financial support reaching marginalized people. Two possibilities might be introduced in this respect. First, policymakers may introduce the term in the budget statements related to the recovery measures or frameworks, along with a specific expenditure tracking system to monitor the disbursements made. Second, they may use a system to issue reports on how these disbursements are reaching women and supporting gender equality (SDG indicator 5.C.1).