



PROJECTED GENDER IMPACT OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

SUMMARY

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

This publication is an extended summary of a detailed research report titled ‘Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community.’¹ The study was conducted across the ASEAN Member States in 2015 and findings published in March 2016. The main report was noted by the 27th ASEAN Summit in November 2015 and disseminated among all relevant stakeholders in March 2016.

Readers are requested to refer to the main study report for comprehensive information on the study context, methodology, data sources, data collected, analysis and findings.

1. The detailed report can be accessed here [http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27th-summit/ASCC_documents/Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community.pdf](http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27th-summit/ASCC_documents/Projected_Gender_Impact_of_the_ASEAN_Economic_Community.pdf)

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Shreyasi Jha and Abhashri Saxena
May 2016

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACW	ASEAN Committee on Women
ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIS	Priority Integration Sector
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise

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I. PROJECTED IMPACT OF THE AEC: PROSPERITY FOR ALL?

By most economic measures, the ASEAN region is an economic powerhouse. The combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the region was US\$2.4 trillion in 2011, making it the seventh largest economy in the world. Labour-force expansion and productivity improvements drive GDP growth—and the ASEAN countries are making impressive strides in both areas. Almost 60 per cent of total growth since 1990 has come from sectors such as manufacturing, retail, telecommunications and transportation. Trade from the ASEAN – both the share of intra-ASEAN trade and extra-ASEAN trade – is expanding at a rapid pace, with different countries specializing in different commodities.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which came into effect in December 2015, sets the foundations of a single market and production base allowing for the free movement of goods, services, investment, capital and facilitated mobility across the ten ASEAN Member States. But will this integration benefit women? Through a rigorous analysis of trade and labour market data relating to women's economic participation, the report concludes that the impact of the formation of AEC on women is going to be significant in terms of the volume of jobs that are created. However, in terms of changing the gender pattern of employment and wages, the impact will be small.

It is necessary to understand the mechanisms through which emerging economic integration under the AEC will impact women's economic empowerment as well as identify opportunities and potential challenges for women's equal participation in ASEAN integration. While the number of women employed may rise, the increase

will not necessarily change other employment outcomes: wages, types of jobs and the sectors where women are currently employed. Supply and demand side policy interventions are necessary to increase women's share in paid employment and in their wage levels. Societies and governments have to realize that investing in increasing women's share in the regional and national trade and national income is a win-win strategy for the society, economy, private businesses and individuals.

TRADE EXPANSION IS NOT GENDER NEUTRAL

The underlying relationship between trade and gender equality is fundamentally the same as the relationship between trade and inequality.² Trade expansion creates winners and losers in the economy in the short term. Unfortunately, the losers often come disproportionately from the poor.³

Trade expansion may worsen gender inequality because women are at a different starting point, relative to men, and therefore, not in a position to take advantage of the growing economic opportunities that comes with trade expansion. Some factors that explain the different starting point for women include different gender roles, the hierarchical relationship between women and men in society, and women's unequal access to economic resources (such as land, credit and technology). Thus, while trade liberalization policies by themselves may not discriminate against women, women may be worse off post-liberalization because of the constraints they face to participate fully in the post-liberalization economic growth process.

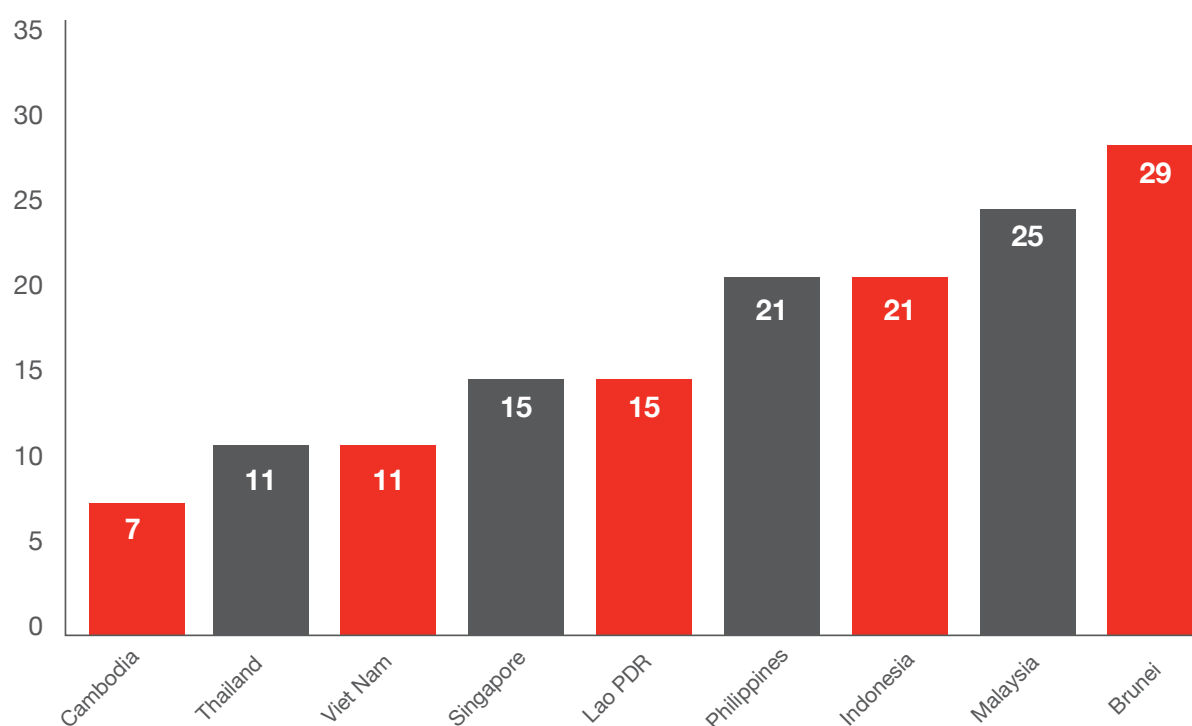
2. Korinek (2005).

3. Harrison et al. (2010).

Gender inequality is not only a matter of justice. It also hinders the potential of the AEC to achieve prosperity for all. Existing gender inequalities impact the gains from trade liberalization and economic growth. A recent study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) concludes that gender inequality creates an average income loss of 17.5 per cent in the long term for developing countries and 14 per cent for Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.⁴ Figure 1 shows the long term income loss due to gender gaps in the entrepreneurship and labour market for nine ASEAN countries.

Given this close relationship between existing gender inequality and inclusive growth it is important to examine the gender impact of ASEAN economic integration to ensure that all sections of the society – the privileged and the disadvantaged, rich and poor, men and women – may be in a position to benefit from AEC-led economic expansion. Conversely, by investing in gender equality the goals of the AEC will be accomplished more efficiently and fairly.

Figure 1 GDP losses due to economic gender gaps in ASEAN countries (% of GDP)



Source: Estimates by Cuberes and Teignier (2014). Losses are estimated for a particular year for each country and can thus be interpreted as a one-off increase in GDP if gender gaps were to be removed

4. Teignier (2015).

TRADE IN THE AEC: A GLOBAL POWERHOUSE ON THE RISE

By most economic measures, the ASEAN region is an economic powerhouse. Labour-force expansion and productivity improvements drive GDP growth—and the ASEAN countries are making impressive strides in both areas. Almost 60 per cent of total growth since 1990 has come from sectors such as manufacturing, retail, telecommunications and transportation. With a population of nearly 600 million, ASEAN has the third-largest labour force in the world, behind China and India.⁵

Income growth has remained strong since 2000, with average annual real gains of more than 5 per cent. Some member nations have grown at a rapid pace: Viet Nam, for example, took just 11 years (from 1995 to 2006) to double its per capita GDP from US\$1,300 to US\$2,600. Extreme poverty is rapidly receding. In 2000, 14 per cent of the region's population was below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 a day (calculated in purchasing-power-parity terms), but by 2013, that share had fallen to just 3 per cent.⁶

Trade from the ASEAN – both the share of intra-ASEAN trade and extra-ASEAN trade – is expanding at a rapid pace, with different countries specializing in different commodities.⁷ That intra-ASEAN trade expanded proportionately to the expansion in world trade indicates that ASEAN economic integration has been trade-creating (increased trade with “lower cost” partners and welfare) and not trade-diverting (reduced trade with lower-cost partners and welfare). As a result, ASEAN integration has not taken place at the expense of global integration, but has in fact been a “building block” for world trade rather than a “stumbling-block.”⁸

Similarly, the role of foreign investments in ASEAN global integration has grown noticeably over the past decade, even taking into account the financial crisis of 2008. The perception of ASEAN countries as destinations for foreign investments is very positive with several ASEAN members ranking among the top investment destinations.⁹ Remarkably, intra-regional investments have taken a central role in this context. The share of intra-regional foreign direct investment (FDI) is rising (Figure 2), a result of the confidence in future opportunities in the region and the relative stability offered by the region in contrast to the rest of the world.

Figure 2 Intra-ASEAN, extra-ASEAN and total FDI (in millions of USD) 2000–2010

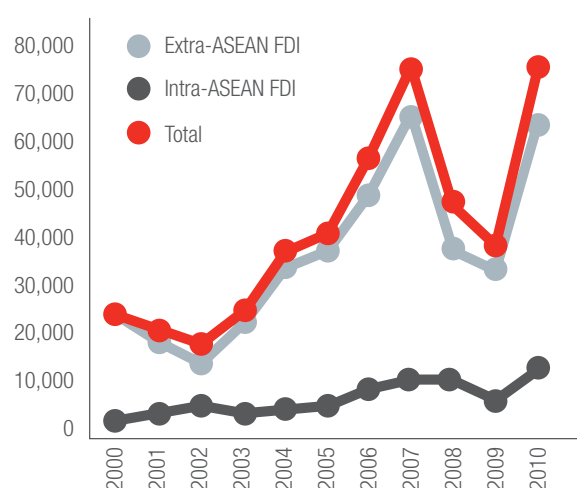
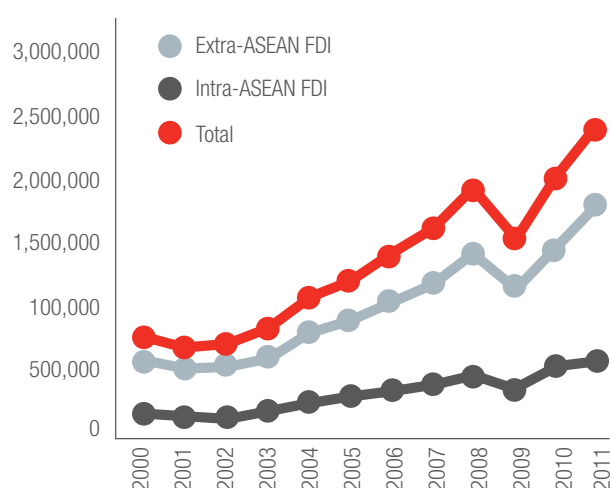


Figure 3 Intra-ASEAN, extra-ASEAN and total merchandise trade (in million of current USD) 2000–2011



5. Vinayak et al. (2014).

6. KPMG (2014).

7. ADB (2015).

8. Ibid.

9. ASEAN (2014).

The AEC Priority Integration Sectors (PISs) accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the region's exports in 2003,¹⁰ however, since 2007 the share of PISs has been gradually declining. The only PISs where export grew at a high rate of 10–15% per annum (higher than electronics) are agro-based and automotive products. From 2007 to 2013, exports of wood-based, fisheries and electronic products slowed down significantly, growing at negative rates.

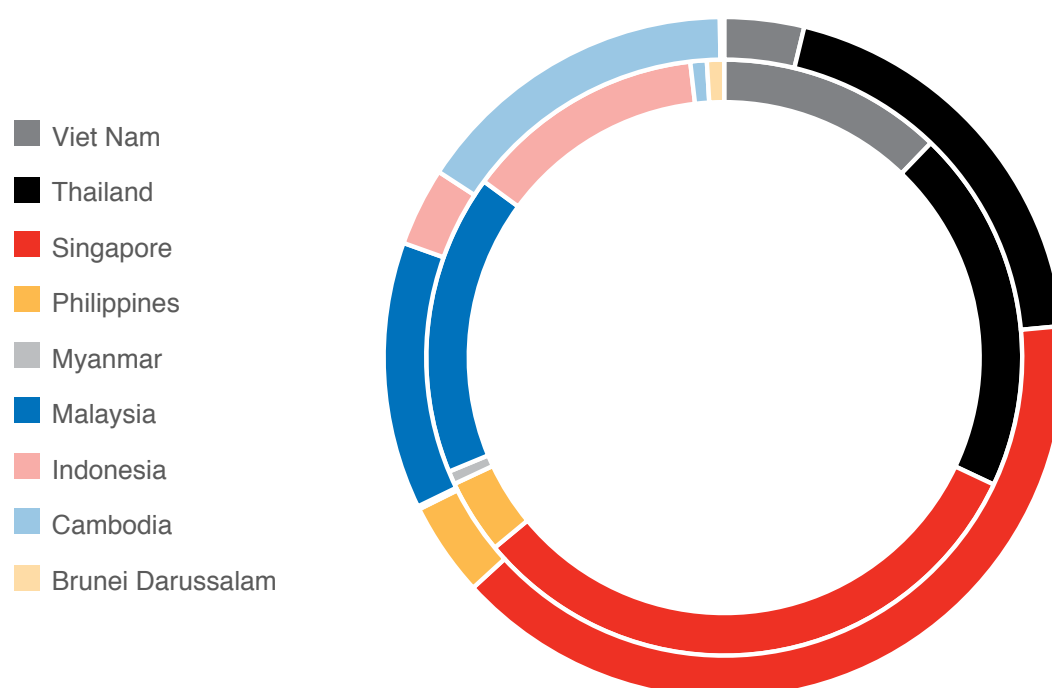
IMPACT OF THE AEC ON WOMEN'S SHARE OF EXPORTS, WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT¹¹

While overall trade is expanding both intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN, the value of women's share of exports, which is calculated to assess women's current contribution to the trade from this region, has remained more or less constant.¹² This pattern

is reflective of the broad gender differentials in work force participation and the informalization of women's work (including women's care work). Estimates of future patterns of female share of exports, employment and wages show that gender differentials in these domains are likely to continue, in the absence of any immediate policy interventions to address the gender gaps.

In Figure 4, the inner-circle is the relative female share of exports for the ASEAN Member States (excluding Lao PDR) in 2013, while the outer-circle is the predicted value of the female share of export in 2025. Female share of exports in the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam go up significantly between 2013 and 2025, the share of female in exports remains the same in Myanmar and Singapore between 2013 and 2025, where the share of female in exports falls in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Figure 4 Female share of exports 2013 & 2025



Source: Estimates based on ILOStat and COMTRADE

10. The 11 PISs are: electronics, e-ASEAN, healthcare, wood-based products, automotives, rubber-based products, textiles and apparels, agro-based products, fisheries, air travel and tourism.

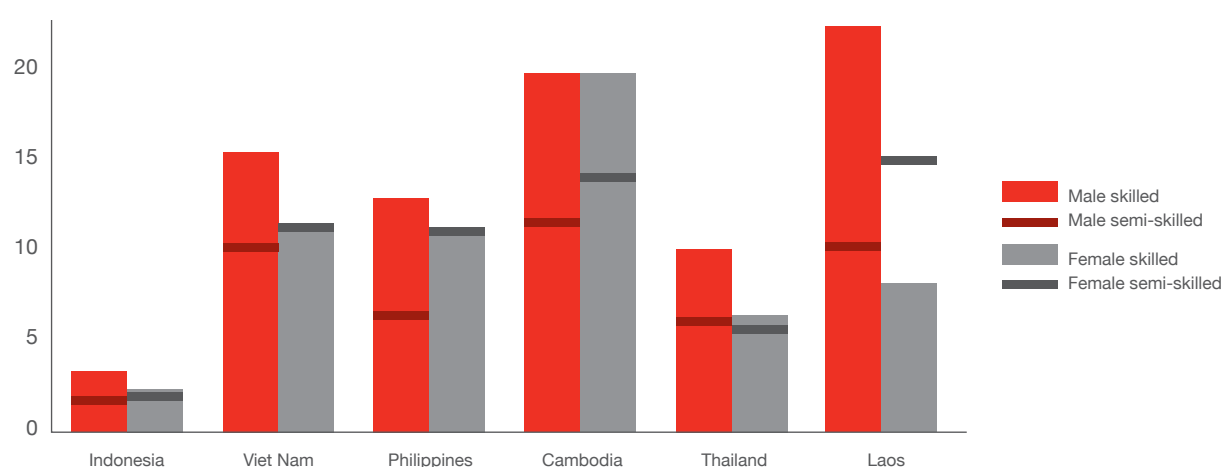
11. Readers are referred to the main report for a detailed discussion on the calculation of the female share of exports.

12. The value of female share of export for an industry is calculated by the female labour force participation rate for a particular industry multiplied by the total value of exports for that industry. Using this formula an estimate for the female share of the total value of exports is obtained.

An analysis of the International Labour Organization (ILO) data show that the impact of the AEC on the gender wage gap remains at approximately 20 per cent in 2025. While wages are predicted to increase for both male and female skilled and unskilled workers, the average wage increase is highest for skilled male workers and lowest for unskilled female workers (a large number of whom are migrant and vulnerable workers).

Overall, as with wages, it is predicted that job gains for male workers tend to be higher than for female workers for both semi-skilled and unskilled categories. It is predicted that the male share of employment is expected to expand by 13 per cent in the Philippines, 11 per cent in Cambodia and 7 per cent in Thailand. Female share of employment is expected to expand in Viet Nam and Cambodia (13 per cent), and Indonesia (11 per cent).¹³

Figure 5 AEC effects on female and male wages
(% change from 2004 baseline, 2025)



Source: Based on estimates from ILO (2014)

Table 1 AEC effects on skilled and semi-skilled employment
(% change from 2004 baseline, 2025)

Effects on total employment (% from baseline, 2025)						
	Male			Female		
	Skilled	Semi-skilled	All	Skilled	Semi-skilled	All
Indonesia	0	1.7	1.5	0	11.8	9.9
Viet Nam	0	1.2	1	0	13.1	11.1
Philippines	0	13.4	8.4	1	9	5.6
Cambodia	0	11	9.8	0	13	11.7
Thailand	0	7	6.1	0	6.1	5.1
Laos	0	3	3.5	0	1.9	2.1

Source: Based on estimates from ILO (2014)

13. Based on estimates from ILO (2014).



Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

ARE WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN ASEAN PRIORITY SECTORS?

The share of high-skilled sectors (such as automotives and electronics, which compromised 4.8 percent and 15.6 percent respectively of the share to total exports) in the ASEAN economies is increasing. Whereas sectors where women dominate the workforce such agriculture and garments are relatively stagnant. Value-added agro products show an upward swing, as do other commercial agriculture-based products such as rubber and wood. Non-PISs such as financial services and oil and energy are also a large share of ASEAN exports. Both these sectors are currently dominated by male employees.

Agro products, garments and tourism (all three) comprise the largest share of exports from many ASEAN countries, and it is expected that with the AEC's focus on expanding trade in the PIS, the share of these sectors will expand.

In the oil and energy, and financial services sectors, women's participation is generally in more skilled types of jobs but in a smaller proportion. These are considered highly skilled and, given the skill differences between men and women, the jobs in these sectors tend to be male-dominated.

Table 2 Female share of employment by major economic sectors, most recent year (%)

	Male			Female		
	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services
ASEAN	40.6	21.6	37.8	39.2	16.4	44.4
Cambodia	33.7	24.6	41.6	32.7	25.9	41.4
Lao PDR	69.2	9.9	20.9	73.5	6.7	19.9
Malaysia	15.4	32.8	51.8	8.3	19.8	71.9
Philippines	37.9	19.2	42.9	20.1	10	69.9
Singapore	0	22.2	77.8	0	14	86
Thailand	44.1	22.6	33.3	39.3	17.7	43.1
Viet Nam	45	25.1	29.9	48.8	17	34.2

Source: ILO Stats

II. OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE AEC

THE AEC PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES BUT ...

The AEC presents economic opportunities for both men and women through a boost in trade and formal, paid employment opportunities. It is also expected that employment opportunities will expand in PISs, some of which are women dominated (including agriculture, tourism and garments). Countries where there are large numbers of skilled workers – men and women – will benefit significantly from the increased employment opportunities in skilled professional categories, especially exportable services.. While SME development provides potentially important opportunities for increasing women's SME participation in the region, they are reported to have difficulties in gaining access to finance, technology and markets.

SME development in ASEAN is embedded in the third pillar of the AEC Blueprint, namely, equitable economic development, and SME development directly contributes towards achieving the implementation of the third pillar. Certain ASEAN PISs present significant opportunities for women's increased economic participation. Sector-specific opportunities are identified below for the agriculture, tourism, garments and finance, which are export intensive sectors (Figure 6).



Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

Figure 6 Economic opportunities for women's participation in key ASEAN sectors

<p>Opportunities in Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing gender responsive policies and social protections • Structural set up for gender machinery well defined in every country with focal points in line ministries, and sub national levels • Increased FDI in agribusiness • Opportunities for women owned SMEs in agribusiness and agro products • Established structures for agricultural training and credit provisions 	<p>Opportunities in Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booming tourism sector in the region • Number of technical and vocational training programmes focusing on skill development in the tourism sector • High growth and investment potential of the tourism sector in the region • Large numbers of workforce (under 25 years) with potential to be appropriately trained • Successful role models • Established structures for training and credit provision
<p>Opportunities in Garment Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal export oriented sector; established sector with large existing markets • Increased FDI in key growth sectors including garments and textiles • Skill upgradation opportunity via supply chain • Established standards for minimum wages and increasing (though still fairly limited) space for collective bargaining • Established structures for training and credit provisions 	<p>Opportunities in Financial Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly globalized and rapidly expanding sector • Presence of a number of women role models • Large young and educated workforce with progressive mindsets about gender • Increasing recognition by private companies and government to promote more women in senior positions • Laws on sexual harassment and mandatory maternity leave exist in all ASEAN countries; Some countries have taken steps to promote shared parenting

However, most women's ability to access these opportunities is likely to be quite limited, and at the aggregate level, these opportunities will not benefit the majority of women because of widespread constraints in women's participation in the labour market. The presence of supply-side and demand-side barriers in the labour market limit women from taking advantage of the welfare gains and opportunities created from the AEC-led economic expansion in the region.

SUPPLY SIDE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION PERSIST

As explained before there are many constraints that prevent women from benefiting from the AEC and as a result Fewer women than men are present in the labour market in ASEAN. Economic outcomes on women's participation show that the female labour force participation rate is persistently lower than male. While the gap may have shrunk in some countries, it has widened in others.

The female labour force participation rate is persistently lower across all ASEAN countries. While the gap may have shrunk in some countries, it has widened in others. The male-female labour force participation gap is narrowest for Lao PDR (3%), widest for Indonesia (33%) and has narrowed

marginally in Singapore and Brunei. The average gender gap in labour force participation across all ASEAN member states is 19 per cent .

Persistent gender skill gap and gender wage gap. More women are employed in lower skilled and lower paying jobs than men, resulting in a persistent and high gender wage gap. This gender gap is not only apparent in the lower absolute numbers of women in the workforce, but also in the types of jobs that women perform. The data shows that in almost all ASEAN countries, women tend to predominantly find employment in low-skilled jobs (Figure 8) and so it is not surprising that there is a persistent gender wage gap (Figure 9). If women are not finding employment in high-skilled and high-paying jobs, then there is little scope for increasing their income.

Figure 7 Labour force participation rate, female and male, 1990–2014

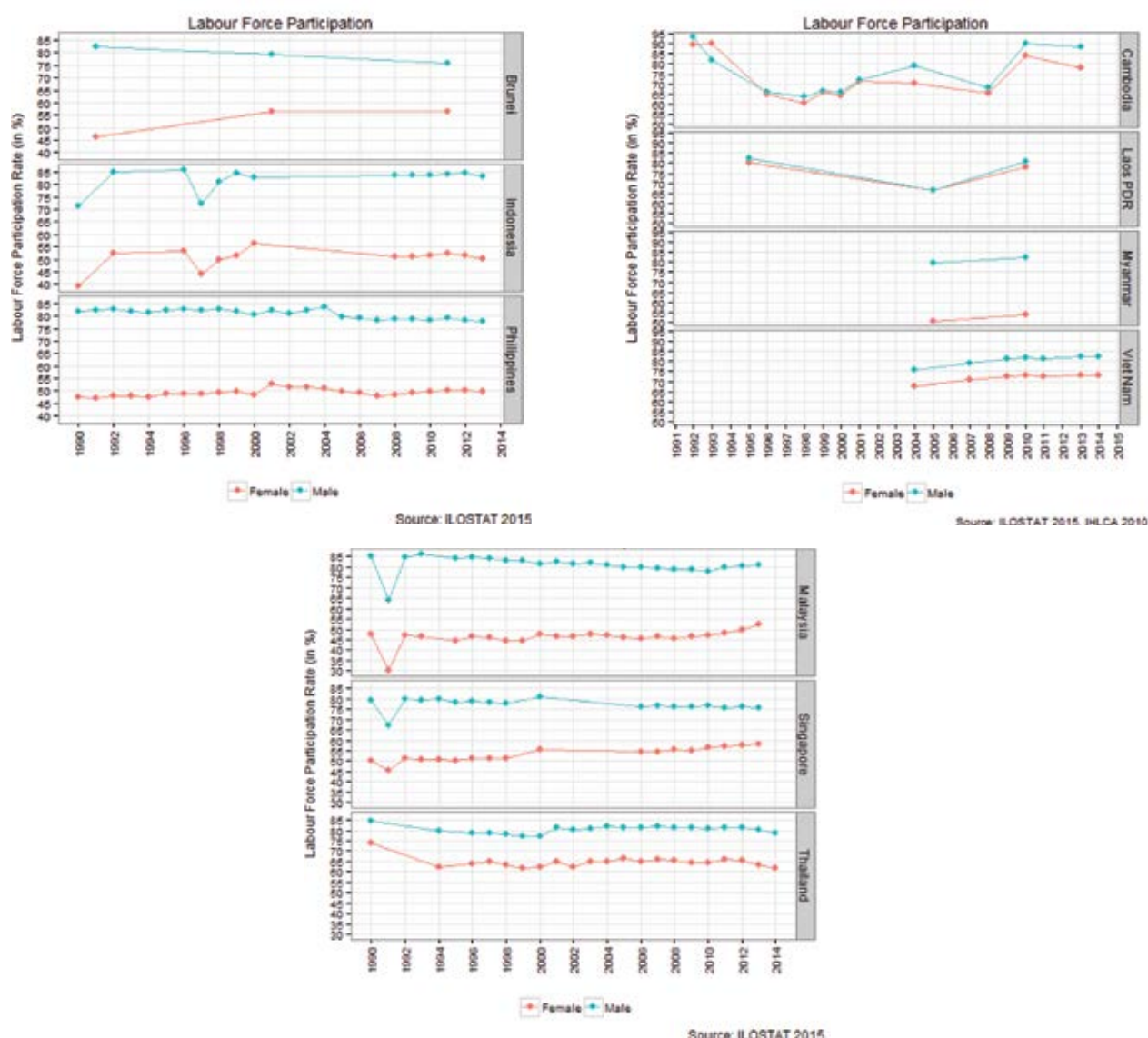
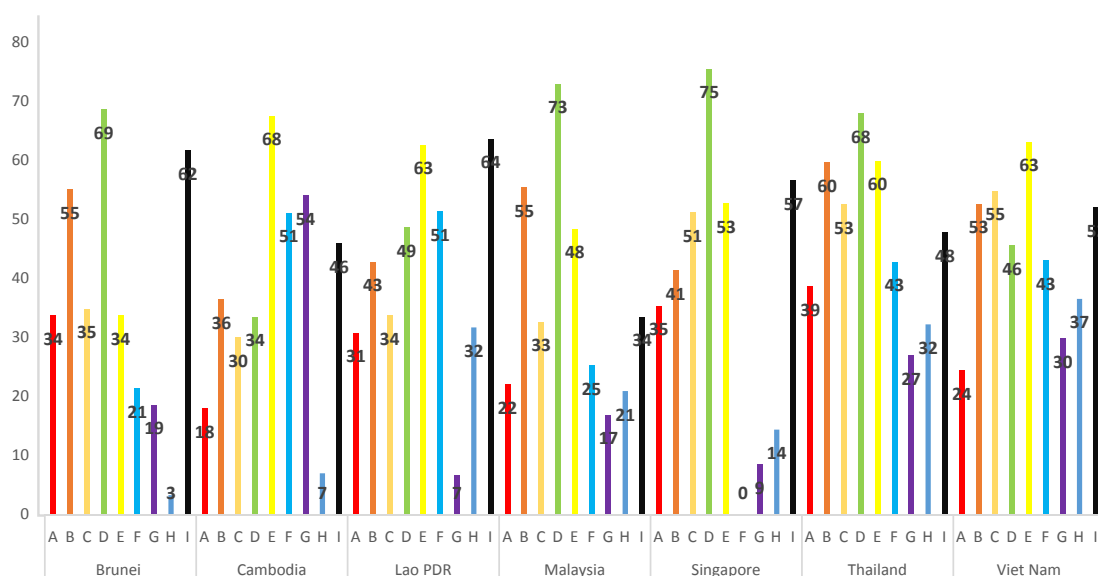


Figure 8 Female share of economic occupation

Source: ILOStat; Singapore data is based on Ministry of Manpower Statistics, 2014;

where A is Legislators, Managers and Senior Officials;

B is Professionals;

C is Technicians and associate professionals;

D is Clerical support workers;

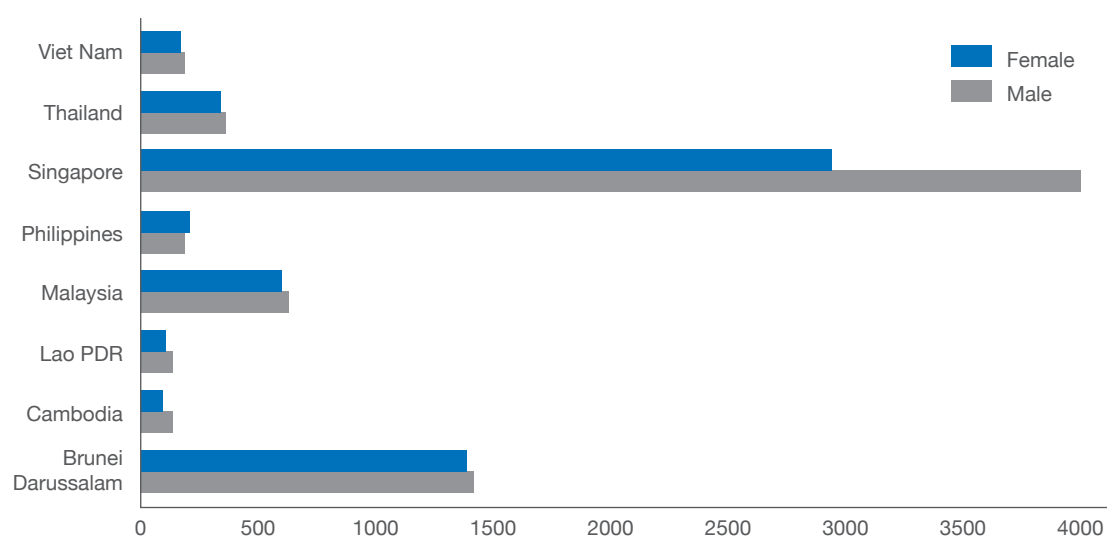
E is Service and sales workers;

F is Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers;

G is Craft and related trades workers ;

H is Plant and machine operator; and assemblers; and

I is Elementary occupations.

Figure 9 Average monthly wages by sex, most recent year available (in USD)¹⁴

Source: ILO Stats

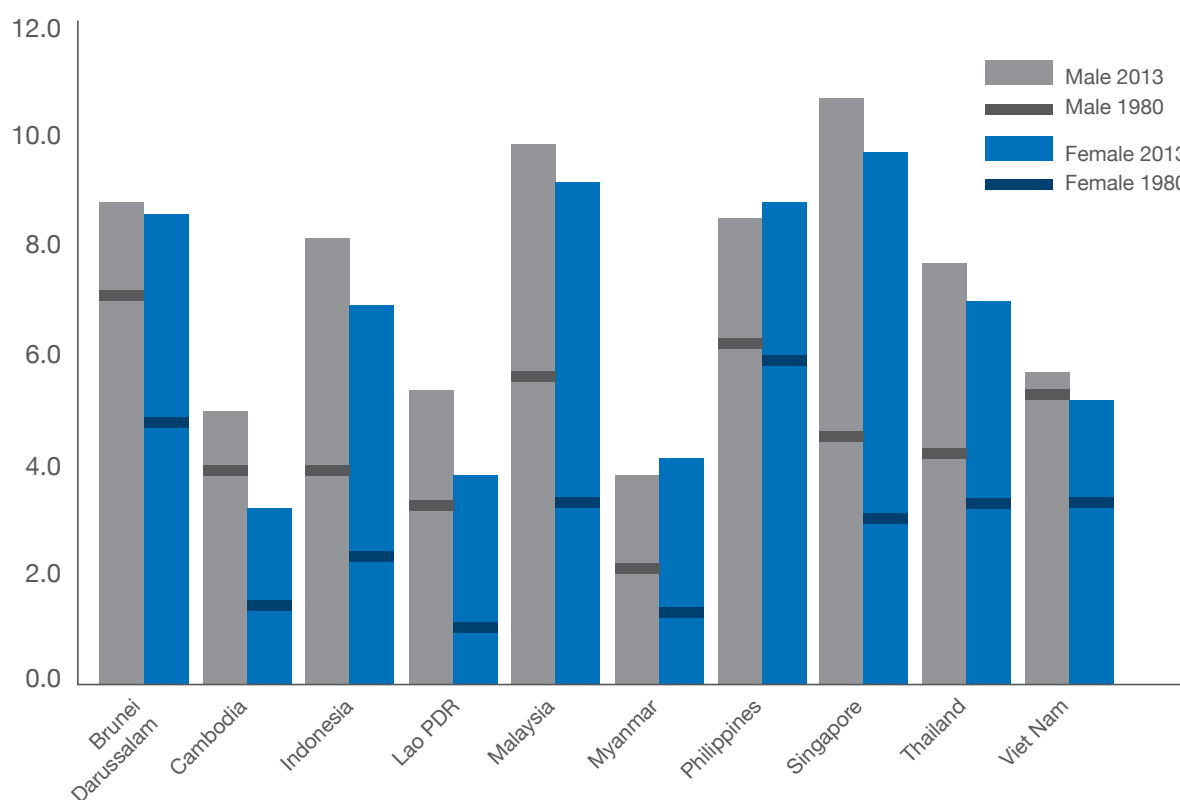
14. It should be noted that the mean as a measure of gender gap may be negatively biased due to the presence of outliers. For example, in the case of Singapore, the gender wage gap in 2012 was 11.2% when we consider median instead of mean. However, due to the unavailability of median wages from other countries and for the purpose of regional reporting, the average (mean) wage rate has been used. (as reported by ILO).

The majority of women are employed in vulnerable jobs with limited access to benefits and social protection. Qualitative data collection revealed that while women's participation in PIS is relatively high, the quality of their participation is quite poor. Women in these sectors face tremendous hardship in terms of the type of work they perform – mostly at the bottom end of the supply chain – and in the barely subsistence wages that they are paid. This is also true in high-income countries, such as Singapore and Brunei. Also, there is almost complete absence of any social protection benefits since women perform short-term, contractual work and informal sector including paid care work. For example, in the garment sector, hiring homeworkers to do the labor-intensive work of assembling garments and paying them by the piece, subcontractors keep their wage costs and overhead low, and minimize the risk of loss associated with uncertain orders (Carr, Chen and Tate 2004). In this context, it is important to note that migrant women are

overrepresented in informal work without social protection benefits, making them relatively more vulnerable.

Gender gaps in education have been declining but educational attainment of women continues to lag behind that of men. Positive relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation has implication for the expectation regarding the skill level of their occupation. In countries where there is the higher means of years among women, the expectation would be that more women would be employed in higher skilled jobs and vice versa. Educational attainment data show that women tend to spend fewer years in school than men, except in Brunei, Myanmar and Philippines where the gender gap in educational attainment is approximately equal. Educational attainment for females is lower than males at the tertiary level in Cambodia, Laos PDR and the Philippines.

Figure 10 Mean years of school (in years) male and female (1980 & 2013)

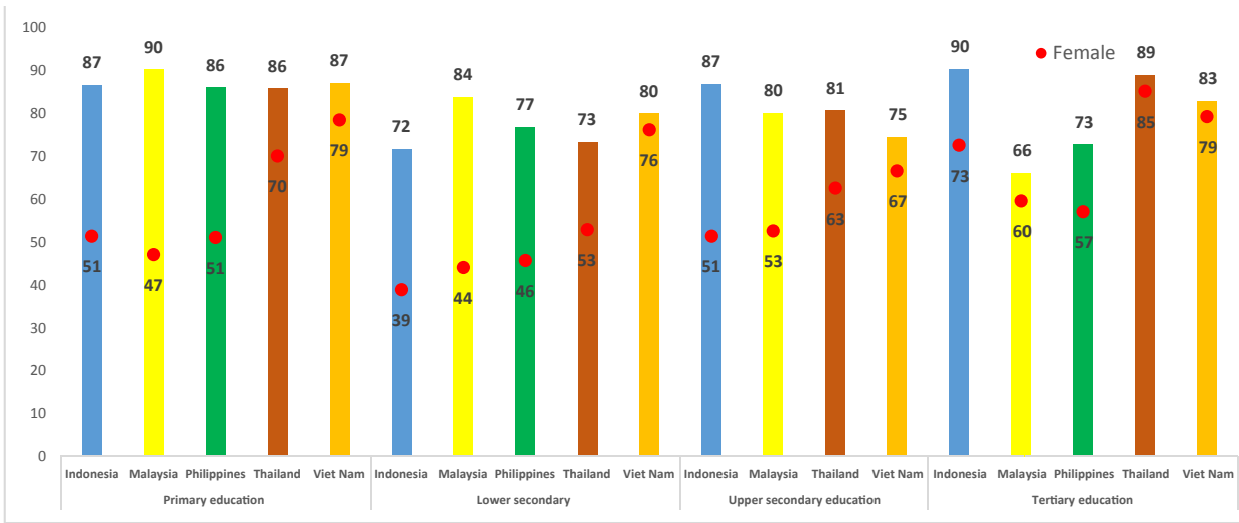


Source: UNDP Human Development Report Office

Large numbers of highly-educated women remain unemployed. Labour force participation rates by different education levels show that a large percentage of highly educated women remain unemployed (Figure 11). For instance, the female labour force participation rate in Myanmar is more or less constant at approximately 50 per cent, indicating that the high tertiary-level educational attainment by women does not translate into more paid employment among women. This

is also true for a number of other countries, including Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Viet Nam. The female labour force participation rate in Malaysia remains at a nearly constant level. This indicates that, in addition to educational attainment, there are other important factors which limit the employment of women in higher paying jobs. These include cultural, social and institutional constraints that will be explored in the next section.

Figure 11 Relationship between level of educational attainment and labour force participation rate (%)



Source: ILOStat. Data refers to the most recent year available between 2012 - 2013

DESPITE SOME PROGRESS, INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS PERSIST...

Continued presence of gender discriminatory customary laws in certain ASEAN countries. All ASEAN countries provide constitutional equality between men and women. However, in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, customary law takes precedence over constitutional law. Indonesia, and Malaysia recognize personal as a valid source of law under the constitution even in instance when it violates constitutional provisions on nondiscrimination or equality.¹⁵ The presence and recognition of customary laws in some countries creates additional legal barriers to women's rights and participation. Discriminatory laws and policies, combined with cultural and social norms, create barriers to women's economic participation and limit women's access to economic opportunities, credit and mobility.

Limited effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. Laws and policies to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming are clearly defined in ASEAN countries but have limited impact due to issues with implementation, limited inter-departmental and ministerial coordination, as well as inadequate budgetary allocations. While systems and structures have been put in place, existing gaps in their implementation reinforce the marginalization of gender issues vis-à-vis other policies.¹⁶ Women's issues are commonly classified as a "social" or "health" issue in ASEAN countries. It was noted during interviews that women/gender departments tend to be discounted by ministries that drive the economic agenda in the country. This is of specific concern in the context of AEC because the key ministries involved in the implementation of AEC are likely to be distanced from gender-mainstreaming concerns and affirmative action. The vast disparity in women's economic participation requires special support and resources to level the playing field between men and women. Limited capacity of gender machinery and gender-mainstreaming efforts at the national level will prevent effective implementation of gender-responsive policies.

Due to cultural norms women are disadvantaged in acquiring land and assets and this is mirrored in discriminatory laws. Laws governing property rights typically stem from the widely prevalent social bias that men are the heads of households, with exclusive rights to control and manage all of the family's property. Even when in most countries, women have equal rights in respect of other non-land assets, in practice, women generally have less power to make spending, employment and family-related decisions than men.

Women contribute substantially to economic welfare through large amounts of unpaid work, such as child-rearing and household tasks, which often remains unseen and unaccounted for in national income. Responsibility for care work is high on women's list of responsibilities and there is negligible support from governments to promote shared parenting responsibilities. A recent IMF and World Bank study highlighted the importance of strong childcare systems. These studies found that effective child-care systems are necessary prerequisites for economies to take full advantage of women's potential.¹⁷ Absence of childcare and high responsibility for unpaid domestic work also constrain women's participation in paid employment. Data on women's care work is limited but where it exists the data reveal that the gender unpaid work gap was 3.5 hours for married women. That is, married women on average spend 3.5 hours per day (more than men) on unpaid care work.

Lack of clarity in key labour laws relating to equal remuneration, discrimination and maternity benefits contributes to women's relative weaker position in the labour market. An examination of the labour laws of ASEAN member countries in promoting gender equality at work and the protection of women workers has revealed that much progress has been made in the legal dimension. However, while almost all ASEAN countries have laws against discrimination and policies promoting women's work, there is still lack of clarity in the law itself and relatively few opportunities for women to balance their reproductive and productive responsibilities. Moreover, most women work in the informal sector where legislation is not applied.

15. World Bank database on Women, Business and Law (2013): <http://wbl.worldbank.org/>.

16. Annex 8 in the main report provides an overview of the gender machinery in ASEAN Member States and reviews the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming in the countries.

17. IMF (2015).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN TRADE ORIENTED SECTORS

Bridging the education and skills divide can boost female labour force participation.

Empirical evidence from around the world shows that higher educational attainment is correlated with higher labour force participation. A number of steps can be taken to bridge the gender education and skills gaps.

- Cash incentives to send girls to school and continue schooling: Beyond simply increasing the overall education spending, policymakers should consider measures that increase the incentives to send girls to school, for example, by making cash transfers to poor families conditional on their daughters' school attendance, as in Bangladesh and Cambodia (World Bank, 2011).
- Provide scholarships to women to get business degrees and professional training in skilled professions (focusing on the ASEAN priority sectors including non traditional occupations for women such as engineers and technicians). It is extremely important that the professional/vocational training being provided is gender responsive and does not reinforce gender stereotypes. For instance, there should be financial incentives for women to enroll in skilled professions, other than tailoring, housekeeping and catering – where women typically dominate Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses currently being offered in ASEAN countries.

- Offer subsidized loans for female students to pursue higher education degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) that prepares them for the jobs in high-skill sectors that are expected to expand.
- In-work and other trainings: Linking benefits such as childcare allowance to labour force participation (“in-work” benefits), participation in job training, or other active labour market programmes can increase the incentives for women to rejoin the labour market.

Subsidized loans to women entrepreneurs will boost the supply of women-led companies.

In order to improve the share of women-led companies in the ASEAN PIS, credit can be made available to women-led companies in the PISs. In case of agriculture or industries, subsidized loans can be offered to women farmers to buy equipment. It is very important that the ownership of the company and that any equipment be under a woman's name to ensure complete ownership.

Properly designed family benefits can help support female labour force participation.

Publicly financed parental-leave schemes can help parents reconcile work and family life, and maintain their connection to the labour market through a guaranteed return to their job. Policies that provide and encourage greater parity between paternity and maternity leave could support a more rapid return to work among mothers and help shift underlying gender norms.

REFORM THE ENTIRE CHILDCARE SYSTEM AND FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM TO HELP WORKING MOTHERS AND NOT PENALIZE THEM FOR TAKING TIME OFF

Several studies point out that better access to comprehensive, affordable and high-quality childcare frees up women's time for employment. Demand side - to increase demand for more skilled workers.

Eliminate/reduce gender-based discrimination in employment and labour market policies. In some countries, women's participation in the labour market is affected by legal constraints that limit their participation in specific sectors of the economy (e.g., Viet Nam) and restricts their access to credit and property rights (e.g., Malaysia). In many other countries, tradition and unwritten rules curtail women's economic opportunities. These norms and legal constraints have an impact on demand for female labour, and thereby on trade outcomes. It is important to identify the gender-discriminatory legislation and remove them to ensure demand for female labour increases.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AT ASEAN LEVEL

Gender mainstreaming across ASEAN pillars. The current ASEAN mechanism that treats gender as a social issue needs to be carefully reviewed. The gender impact of economic policies needs to be explicitly included across all AEC regional councils and sectoral bodies. It is recommended that the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) coordinates with Member States to initiate bilateral dialogue with AEC bodies to promote strategies for gender mainstreaming across AEC policy areas and sectoral bodies.

Remove labour market distortions to level the playing field for women. The analysis revealed that all ASEAN countries have ratified three important ILO Conventions related to gender equality in the workforce. However, the implementation of these protocols relating to equal remuneration, discrimination and maternal benefits is ineffectively implemented, primarily due to lack of clarity in their interpretation.

Provide fiscal incentives to companies to encourage women in senior management positions. Incentives (such as tax breaks) can be provided to encourage companies to hire more women at the managerial level and include women on boards to boost women in senior leadership positions.

Strictly enforce work place harassment laws. Creating a section within current ACW and ACWC framework to address the gap in sexual harassment legislation at country level. Encouraging countries to undertake formal, mandatory training for all employees – in the public and private sectors – to undergo work place harassment training every year, will promote a safe work environment for all workers, men and women.

Gender monitoring of the AEC. AEC monitoring should include sex-disaggregated data and indicators to track female workforce participation, number of women on boards of ASEAN companies, percentage of government budgetary allocations and expenditure on gender, that is, consider gender-responsive budgeting and tracking at the AEC. The most obvious place where gender can be included within the AEC post-2015 Roadmap is under the equitable development pillar. Breaking down SME development by gender and expanding it to include sex-disaggregated measures of economic progress would go a long way towards pushing Member States along on gender equality in the region.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC PRIORITIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The report recommends targeted policies to promote women's participation in specific ASEAN priority sectors.

Agriculture

- Gender Inclusive Agricultural Practice (GIPA) certification for district and province level line departments and agricultural associations/federations with guidelines for training, developing linkages and certification of small entrepreneurs and producers based on gender responsive and sustainable production processes.
- Basic adult education, and language skill development for women's growth up the value chains.
- Collective community development of the one-village-one-product model and village level cooperatives will be important in giving a boost to women's agency and bargaining power.
- Leverage ICT and smart phone technology to women with technical and market information and better communications
- Establish more women producers' and exporter associations, and farmer unions to support women exporters to engage in regional trade through hand holding, mentoring and counseling will also go a long way in boosting women's empowerment and agency in the sector
- Gender mainstreaming from conventionally 'non-gender' government departments like Trade, Commerce, Finance and Planning.
- Establishing a paid role for existing middlemen in value addition and women's access to market.

Garments

- Establish a Gender Inclusive Fair Trade (GIFT) Certification for commercial production units defined by key standardized gender indicators that go beyond minimum labor standards to ensure holistic integration of women in the economic activity they perform, without barriers.
- Targeted credit and management development opportunities for women's entrepreneurship and enterprise development
- Business mentorship platform for women entrepreneurs. For example through business idea competitions aimed at SME development.
- Gender based parameters for tax levy/subsidy provision for textile businesses to ensure that these parameters are subsequently met.
- Increase labour inspection and monitoring of labor standards and labor laws in factories- especially private and far-flung enterprises.

Tourism

- Establish a Gender Inclusive Fair Trade Certification (same as garments).
- Promote entrepreneurship and enterprise development specifically targeted at women through comprehensive support from provision of trainings (high end business degrees), credit at subsidized rates and opportunities for market linkages (e.g. trade fairs targeting women entrepreneurs etc.)
- Promotion of women role models and providing a platform for mentorship of aspiring women entrepreneurs, for example through apprenticeships and resource support will go a long way in inspiring women's entrepreneurship and agency.
- Resolution of larger migration related issues is vital, within the newly integrated regional structures to ensure that labour standards and rights are enjoyed by all workers.

Financial Services

- Establishing an Engendered Workplace Certification for enterprises defined by key standardized gender indicators that go beyond minimum labor standards to ensure holistic integration of women in the economic activity they perform, without barriers. This certification must include indicators for reporting on mechanisms for addressing sexual harassment cases, review of gender pay gaps, and equal opportunity for experience, training and growth.
- Flexible working arrangements for both parents.
- Meet EU standards for family leave for both parents.
- Tax incentives for firms with higher percentage of women on board and in senior positions.
- Awareness campaign on sexual harassment laws; mandatory sexual harassment training for all firm above a certain size that should be mandatory for all employee and repeated annually.
- Review and correction mechanism for existing gender pay gaps.
- Promote women role models in finance; set up women's association of professional women.

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UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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